

# Uttarakhand-Nepal Trade through Pithoragarh District of Kumaon: A Historical and Economic Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

The basic basis of the progress of any society is the economy of that society. It is only through the economy that mental, physical and cultural development of human can be possible by attaining material comforts. The main basis of the progress of a nation has been considered the resources and business activities available in that nation. No visa or passport is required to travel from Nepal to India or from India to Nepal. This political open border has encouraged trade between the two. Nepal has commercial relations with Tibet and Uttarakhand in the larger Himalayan belt. Nepal has been a major center of trade between India and Tibet since ancient times because the route from India to Tibet was through Nepal. The present study describe the historical and economical trade relation between Uttarakhand and Nepal through Pithoragarh district of Kumaon with various border and pace of trade.

## 1. Introduction

The history of trade between India and Nepal is as old as the history of India and Nepal. Trade based on goods regulations has been going on between India and Nepal for centuries. Kautilya wrote in his famous book "Arthashastra" -

“कृषि ,पशुपाल्ये ,वानिज्येचवार्ता:”

“That is, the hill people kept in touch with each other for agriculture, animal husbandry and trade.”

Pithoragarh District having its entire northern and eastern boundaries being international, assumes a great strategic significance and, obviously, is a politically sensitive district along the northern frontier of India. Being the last district

adjoining Tibbet, it has tremendous strategic importance as the passes of Lipulekh, Kungribingri, Lampia Dhura, Lawe Dhura, Belcha and Keo, open out to Tibbet. The breath taking beauty of Pithoragarh – Himalayas, wide expanses of grassy meadow, perennial streams roaring down the zig-zag course, a stupendous variety of flora and fauna, above all, pure nature yet unsullied, seem to beckon the beholder into their folds, into a charmed world of virgin beauty. ([pithoragarh.nic.in/history](http://pithoragarh.nic.in/history))

It was in the wake of the Chinese aggression that on the 24th Feb. 1960, a sizeable section of Almora district was carved into Pithoragarh district containing extreme border areas with its headquarters in Pithoragarh town. On 15th September 1997, the Champawat Tehsil, hitherto under Pithoragarh, was carved into Champawat district.

Figure.1



Map Source: [www.pithoragarh.gov.in](http://www.pithoragarh.gov.in)

The Pithoragarh town is located at a height of 1645 meters above sea level. The district lies between 29.4° to 30.3° North latitude and 80° to 81° East longitude along the eastern and southern part of the central Himalayas with Indo-Tibetan watershed divide in the north and the Kali river forming a continuous border with Nepal in the east. The Pithoragarh district is surrounded by the national boundaries of Almora, Champawat, Bageshwar and Chamoli districts and extends over an area of 7,217.7 sq. Kms. (<https://uttarakhandtourism.gov.in/districts/pithoragarh/>)

Jhulaghat town is situated at a distance of 35 km from the Pithoragarh city of Uttarakhand. Presently there are 150 to 170 shops here, in which traders from Pithoragarh, Jhulaghat, Nepal and Kali Kumaon are engaged in business activities. The number of shops here was very less during the British period. A swing has been made to go from here to Nepal. Some people are called Jhulaghat towards Uttarakhand and Zulaghat towards Nepal. Legend has it that in ancient times, when the bridge was not built here, people used to go through the yoke (a wooden object placed in the shoulder of bulls to drive the plow), so it was called Jhulaghat. Every day hundreds of people and tons of goods cross over the bridge built here. It is said about the strength of the bridge that once the water level of the Kali river rose in the rain, the water started flowing over the bridge, causing the priest's house and the Masani temple on the bridge to flow there, but no damage to the bridge. At a short distance from Jhulaghat is the temple of Taleshwar Mahadev, where the people of Uttarakhand and Nepal jointly worship.

Jhulaghat, Uttarakhand has been a major barrier to Nepal trade since British times. In the early British period, the present-day Soar was not connected by road connectivity. Then the route from Jhulaghat to Almora was made. Traders from Delhi, Jabalpur, Kashipur and Haldwani used to reach Jhulaghat by foot and from there used to carry ghee, honey, jaggery, grains etc. in horses and carried them to the plains mandis. Nepalese laborers from Nepal used to bring the above materials on their backs and were sold in Jhulaghat. Materials were collected in Nepal by some Nepalese traders and sold to Indian traders by paying customs (bhansara) on the bridge. Since there was a complete lack of cloth, salt, cotton material etc. in Nepal. Therefore, Nepalis used to reach Jhulaghat by traveling for 10 to 15 days from remote areas of Nepal. They used to bring with them ghee and honey and after selling it, they used to buy the items of their requirements. The shops located in Jhulaghat were sold in Jhulaghat. Kali mandi (blankets), jean cloth, terylene, leased pajamas, soaps called prakash, farishta and sunlight, cotton cloth coming from Meerut, sugar, sugar were the main items purchased by the Nepalese.

Jhulaghat was a big market for ghee trade till the road was not built in Soar of Pithoragarh. The Bhatt family of Jhulaghat and Thapa of Baitari district, Kulshrestha, had rights over the business of ghee. Ghee was collected and brought to Jhulaghat by the people of the Nepali villages Shera, Nangtadi, Basali, gudda, dungara, gowlapani, madala, sukudati, devmandu, purchuni adjoining Jhulaghat. Apart from this, there was also a market of Ghee in Tripura Sundari Fair and it was brought for sale in Jhulaghat. Apart from this, Nepalese Khukri was also sold in large quantities here.

Presently, the entry of adequate fashion material, clothing, electronics goods from Korea and China to Nepal has hit the traditional trade a bit, but the archaic trade still remains.

About 90 km from the Soar pargana of Pithoragarh district, Dharchula town is located in the name of a development block of Pithoragarh. Here too, a swing is formed between India and Nepal. The bridge-wise Dharchula and the crossing Nepal are called Darchula (district). The Bhotia and Shauka tribes reside mostly in Dharchula. Budiyaal, Gunjial, garbyal, naplchyal, raunkali, rayapa, kutiyal and other castes reside here. Due to being close to Tibet and Nepal, people here used to do joint trade with Nepal and Tibet based on barter. The said castes used to settle in places called Barpakhya, dhulgadha, rauteda and harsimbagad in Nepal during winter. Since their high Himalayan habitats were covered with snow in the winter, so these people used to go to temporary houses.

Some people of the Nepali community were married to the married Shauka tribe. Hence, both of them did not face any problem in going to Nepal. These people used to produce grains by going there. Barley, rice, maize and madua were produced in the grain. Once the grain was produced, the grains were loaded into their animals and brought to Dharchula. Then during the summer, the said grains were exchanged with the Tibetan salt and Borax, at the Takalakot mandi in the Vyas valley, at the Chhakra mandi in Darma, in the Gyanima mandi of Johar. The rate of exchange was different at different times.

5 nali salt was taken instead of 1 nali (traditional unit of measure weight about 1.5kg) of rice. Similarly, the wool of a goat's body was bought for up to 4 Aane/1 Chavanni (quarters). After barter, these people used to sell the said material to Kumaon Garhwal and Nepal. Since Jhulaghat was close to Pithoragarh, most traders in the plains carried material from Jhulaghat but still Dharchula was a major barrier for Nepal and Tibet's trade through India.

Jauljibi is a small town situated at the confluence of the Kali and Ghori rivers, about 70 km from the solar of Pithoragarh. Shiva Shakti is the temple of Jaleshwar Mahadev in the holy confluence of Kali and Ghori. Every year a joint fair of India and Nepal is held here. Traders from Nepal, India and Tibet before 1962 used to participate in this fair to be held every year from 14th November. Jauljibi was a major center of traditional trade between India and Nepal. While the horses of petals, blankets, jaggery and humla-jumla were brought from Nepal for sale here, the grains, carpets, sweaters, petals, herbs and salt, sohaga, sheep, made by Tibetan traders of India Goats, skins of jhabb animals, chawars cows, etc. were sold in this fair. Therefore, Joulgbi had developed into a center of mutual trade between the three countries.

Even after the end of the fair, there is import and export of goods between India and Nepal throughout the year. There are many shops of Indian traders in Jauljibi. In which Nepalese people of Hukku, Jaljiya villages of Nepal, bordering Nepal, shop. Since there are no shops across the bridge, the market of Nepali villages adjoining the bridge is Jauljibi. The people of Nepal's villages Sananchaura, Chaskot, Shankarpur, Arichina, Reethachopata, adjoining this region, travel through this bridge.

Baluwakot town is 10 km from Jauljibi towards Dharchula. There is also a suspension bridge to go to Nepal. Although this place is not famous for the large trade between India and Nepal, but even there has been exchange of goods between

the local Nepalese and Baluwakot residents here since British times. Nepalese customers shop for items they need daily from shops located in Baluwakot. The people of Bed, Melikhet, Bhartola, Gwali, Lambgaon travel from the border of Baluwakot.

The residence of marginal Bhotia and Shauka tribes of Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand is known as Darma Valley. Vyas and Chaundas valleys are also included in this Darma valley. In the same Darma Valley, a bridge in Garbyang, situated in the Vyas belt, has a bridge for traffic between India and Nepal. Where in the east the Kali River borders this valley with Nepal. On the north side, Nave Danda and Lipudanda separate it from Tibet. Tinker, Marmadhura, Nirapaniyan mountain garlands are located in this valley. In which Shyama Kund is located from which Kali River originates. It is said that Vyas Rishi did penance on the banks of the same kund, hence the name of this valley was Vyas valley. On the outskirts of this belt, there is a mountain called Lipulekh and Taradhura, in the north of which there are borax, salt and gold mines. Which is said to be in the possession of the Government of Tibet. The villages of Tinfar, Vyans, Marama, Balanch of Nepal are along this border.

Being located in the middle of Nepal and Tibet, this place was the bridge of trade between Tibet and Nepal. The work of this bridge used to be a business Shauka tribe of the frontier. They had business friendship with the Huns of Hundesh. These merchants brought wheat, rice, barley etc. grains from Nepal to Gyanima, Garhatok mandis here and exchanged them there with Tibetan salt and borax. Before doing business, a friendship relationship called "Share Chu-Dul Chyu" was established between Shauka and Hunis of Tibet. According to the Tibetan language, Shair means gold, Dul means silver and Chhu means water. Water containing gold and silver is considered a symbol of purity. Therefore, by drinking liquor in a silver cup, beverages were drunk by touching ghee, sattu, wool and gold, both sides used to drink liquor and exchanged goods as a gift. In this way, increasing affinity by eating each other's guts was called "Share Chu Dul Chu". In order to make the friendship permanent, the two friends used to keep two pieces of each stone with them as a proof. These pieces were added as a proof in case of dispute regarding friendship. The contract for writing the law of friendship as evidenced by the pieces of

stone was called 'Gamagiya'. The exchange of salt, wool and grain with the Hunis friends of Tibet was followed by the practice of exchange, and the trade of hide, gold powder, jewelry and animals was in the form of cash or commodities. Thus Garbyaan village was an important center of trilateral trade between India, Nepal and Tibet.

After 1815 AD, the Company Government was established in Uttarakhand and E. Gardener was appointed the first Commissioner of Kumaon. The main objective of the victory of Uttarakhand of East India Company was to increase its capital by recovering maximum wealth from the conquered territories. The company government took away the rights of their land from the farmers and replaced them as tenants of the company. Papdev village of Soar Pithoragarh had fled the village due to high amount of money. (Dr. ram singh, 2007)

Many villages were deserted due to an epidemic in Soar in the present Pithoragarh district in the year 1826–27. In order to cater to the dwindling population, the Doti was encouraged to call the cultivators to settle the barren land. It is thus seen that some families from Nepal also used to settle here and do agricultural work here. (Dr. ram singh, 2007)

In Uttarakhand, the local government was also given the contract of trade by the company government. According to the Diary of Pradhuman Singh, Subedar of 1825 - "Our Company came to Pithoragarh, the grain came from Almode in ponies. Captain Elliott got 1 mana of rice, flour, pulses, 1 goat in 4 aane, four ser ghee for 1 rupee, 10 mana wood contract for 1 rupee from the *Thagi nagarkoti* in Pithoragarh."

At that time there was not a big market available for business in Soar. The cantonment was nominal in which consumption was limited. Due to which local merchants used to barter from Nepal and put the goods on their back and sell them in the mandis of Tanakpur, Haldwani and Kathgodam. At that time, rice was sold in the mandis of the field at the rate of 2 rupees mana (1 mana = 18 kg). Merchants from the plains also used to come here and carry items like ghee, rice and other grains to the ground after loading them in horses. If the local traders here used to reach the salmon themselves by horses, they would get freight at the rate of 2 to 4 rupees per horse.

Uttarakhand's trade with Nepal was mainly from the points of Baramdev and Jhulaghat. The following are the statistics of import and export from Jhulaghat from 1876 to 1883-

Table 1.

Year	Export from Uttarakhand to Nepal (in rupees)	Import of Uttarakhand from Nepal (in rupees)
1876-77	57000	67000
1877-78	74356	66655
1878-79	78626	86189
1879-80	88647	107326
1880-81	98540	101810
1881-82	96298	113985
1882-83	98640	135651
Total	592107	678616

Source: E.T. Atkinson, Himalayan Gazetteer, part-3, vol-2, pg-520

It is proved from the above table that Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand had more imports than Nepal and trade was increasing continuously in every year. While the export from

Nepal was Rs. 592106, the import was Rs. 678616. Hence imports were 14.6 percent higher than exports. The above table is shown as a bar graph as follows –

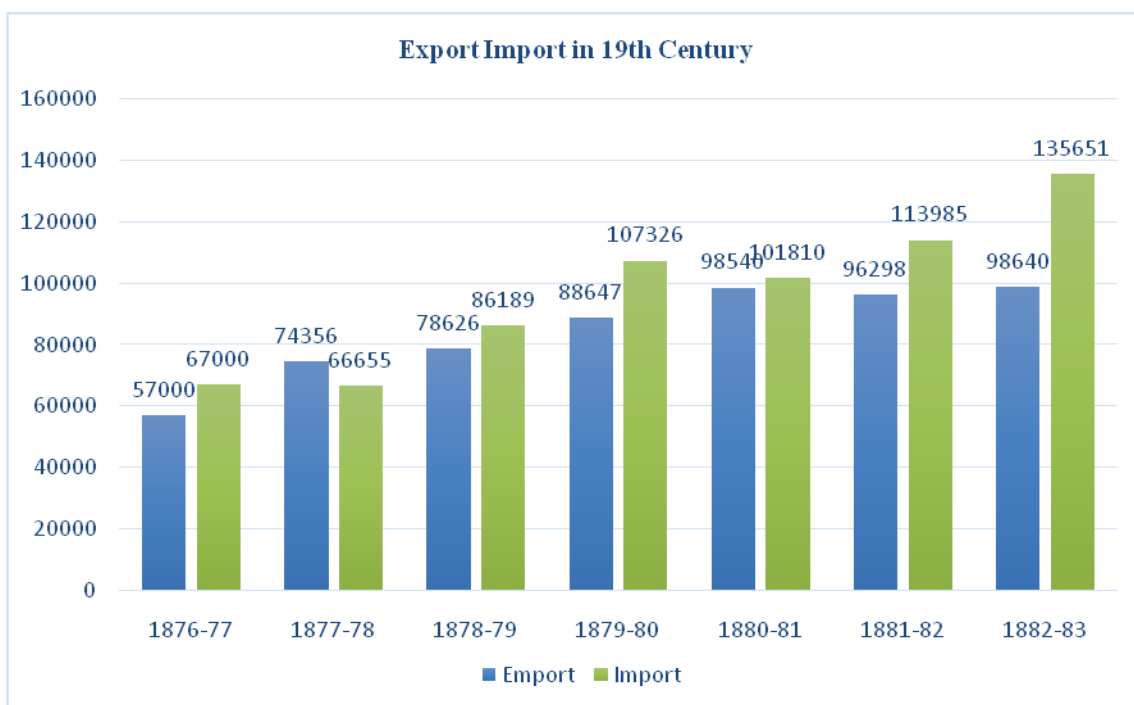


Figure.2

In 1904, Lord Kitchler, the commander of India, went to Nepal for military trials, which further improved the relations between the two countries. Due to the demise of British Emperor Edward VII in 1910, George V became emperor and came to India in December 1911. George V, a fancier of hunting, went to Nepal for hunting and went to Nepal and established good relations.

This was followed by a visit to Britain by Shamsher Chand, which aimed at arranging free import duties in the import of economies for modernization of the Nepalese army and import of scientific instruments for the development of agriculture and industries in Nepal.

These good relations also affected the trade between the two countries. Which can be understood by the following table

Table 2.

Year	Nepal expert to British India (in Lakhs)	Nepal imports from British India (in Lakhs)	Trade Balance
1900-01	24.4	23.7	+.7
1901-02	27.4	16.5	+10.9
1902-03	26.2	14.3	+11.9
1903-04	26.7	13.7	+13.0
1904-05	26.4	15.0	+11.4
1905-06	35.3	16.1	+19.1
1906-07	22.4	12.0	+10.4
1907-08	35.5	15.7	+19.8
1908-09	35.5	17.3	+18.2
1909-10	32.9	16.1	+16.8
1910-11	37.3	17.2	+20.1
1911-12	45.4	22.6	+22.8
1912-13	46.5	22.2	+24.3
1913-14	38.3	19.2	+19.1

Source: Research Thesis, Netra Raj, Indo Nepal trade an analytic study, pg. 29

Looking at the above table, it is known that from the year 1900 to 1914, there has been a steady increase in the imports and exports, except in the year 1900-07. The balance of trade

in Nepal's favor is the lowest is +.7 in Nepal in 1900-01 and the highest trade balance in Nepal's side is +24.3 in 1912-13.

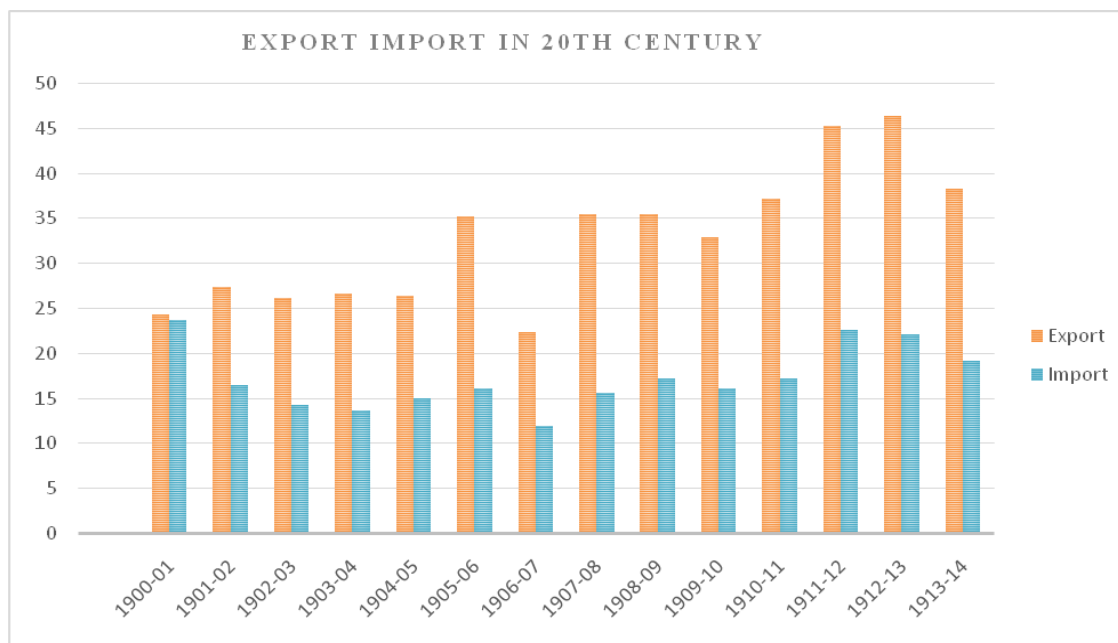


Figure.3

## 2. Import and export of local products with Nepal

Local products between Uttarakhand and Nepal were also imported and exported in large quantities. Since most of these items were traded in trade fairs and pilgrimages. Therefore, there are no figures for this trade. But this trade between the two regions led to the livelihood of many common people of both regions. The main features of this type of import-export were:

### Leather goods

Animal skins and items made from them were imported and exported in large quantities. The Sarki caste lives near the bus station of the present Pithoragarh district. His ancestral work was to make and sell items made of leather. These people used to buy animal skins from hunters and make shoes and coffer from its leather. Which were bought by Nepali people.

Leather goods were also exported by the Nepali people. Hoods were made from goat skin and Dhol (drums) were made from buffalo skin. The wood of Vijayasar was used to make this Dhol. To intensify the sound of the dhol and to strengthen, ghee was applied in it. It took up to 4 kg of ghee to make a Dhol. Dhol, Damua and Hudke made of this type were brought and sold in Uttarakhand. Apart from this, people of Uttarakhand also used to sit on tiger and goat skins, so the Nepali people used to bring animal skins here and sell them.

### Items made of Bamboo and Ringaal

Doti of Nepal used to produce very high quantity of bamboo. Therefore, people here used to make doka, supa, mosta etc. from bamboo and ringaal. Most people of Nepal used these dokas to bring and carry goods. Any person could tell that these people are Nepalese after seeing the flocks of these people wearing doka in the back. Throughout the year, these items were prepared and brought to the fair at Thal, Jhaljibi, Bageshwar and Rameshwar for sale. Ropes made with hemp sticks were also sold in sufficient quantities. These people used to make charas from the leaves of hemp tree and

cannabis was made from grains and ropes from sticks. Thus cannabis cultivation was financially beneficial for these people.

### Wooden items

Nepal, rich in natural wealth, has an abundance of wild wood. Hence items made of wood were very much made and sold in Nepal. Items made of wood were used to keep milk and items made from Nepal were Firka, Binda, Hadpi, Thaki, Pali. Since animal husbandry was a source of income in the rural areas of Uttarakhand. Therefore, there was a lot of demand for these items here. People from rural areas of Uttarakhand used to buy these items from Nepalis in trade fairs.

Timur and gingaru sticks were also sold in the temple of Pashupatinath, which were purchased by Sadhus.

### Iron and copper utensils

Nepal-made khukri was in demand throughout India, including Uttarakhand. Nepali Khukri is seen in the statues of Kumaur and Bishad in the present Pithoragarh district. From which its popularity can be estimated in Uttarakhand. Since Khukri's trade was not authorized, it was illegally brought to Uttarakhand. Apart from this, Bhadeli (Cooking Pot) made of iron and ax, Basuli, Durati, Hammer, Kutli were also exported to various fairs of Uttarakhand.

Copper industry had also developed in Nepal, so the items made of copper, taula, parat, arghya and panchapatra (used for worship) were also sold by the Nepalis.

### Jewelry

A type of gold was extracted by filtering the sand of the Gandaki River of Nepal, which was similar to an ant in shape, it was called "Peplic gold". Various ornaments were made from this gold. Silver dhagule, suttas and nathuli were made by Nepali goldsmiths. The demand of which was also in Uttarakhand. The costumes of the villages along the border of Uttarakhand were similar to those of Nepal, so these people used to buy these jewelry.

**The paper**

A special type of tree was found in the jungles of Nepal, which is called 'Badau' in the language there. The bark of this tree was grinded and rice morsels were put in it and put in a courtyard to dry, which made paper. The people of the mountain in Uttarakhand used to buy this paper made in Nepal. This paper was used to make almanac. This paper was exported to Shanti Niketan located in Haridwar.

Therefore, the above local products were also sufficient in Uttarakhand Nepal trade which was usually done with local people and traders of Pithoragarh. While these items were the means of livelihood for the people of Nepal and Uttarakhand, they served the needs of the people of both the regions. Since there was no market elsewhere for these materials, as well as being handmade, not everyone was able to make them.

Therefore, Uttarakhandis were completely dependent on Nepal for import of these goods.

**3. Conclusion**

The study of the above table of Uttarakhand-Nepal trade and Indo-Nepal trade leads to the conclusion that while the total exports to Nepal from Jhulaghat place in Uttarakhand in the year 1880-81 amounted to 1,01,810 Indian rupees, at the same time 98,540 Indians from all over India Export of rupees was done to Nepal. Thus Uttarakhand's export to Nepal was 21 percent of total exports. Similarly, in 1881-82, Uttarakhand's export to Nepal was Rs 1,13,985 and Rs 96,298 was exported to Nepal from all over India. Thus Uttarakhand's exports to Nepal were 23 percent of total exports.

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