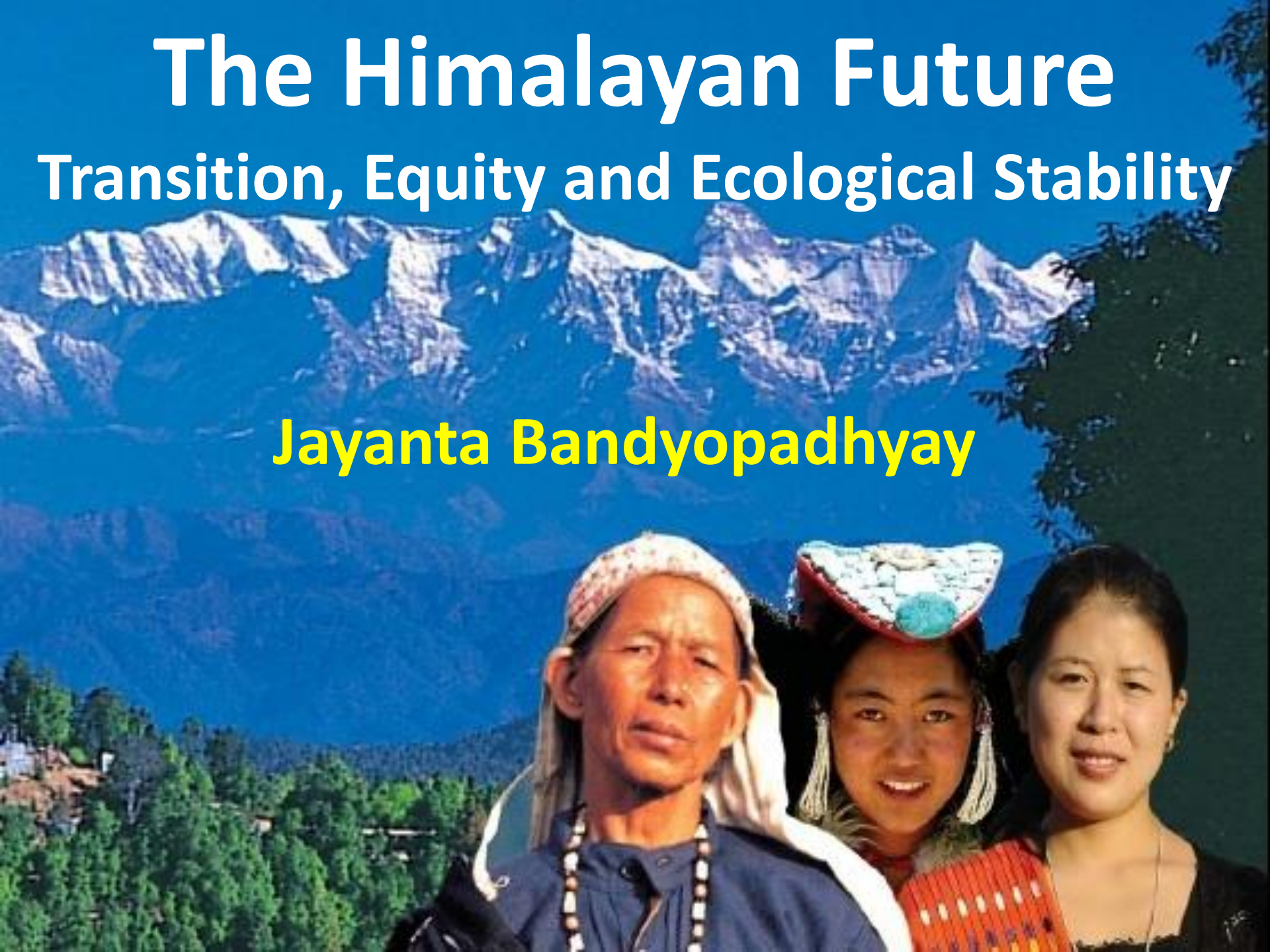


# The Himalayan Future

Transition, Equity and Ecological Stability

Jayanta Bandyopadhyay



# **Himalaya**

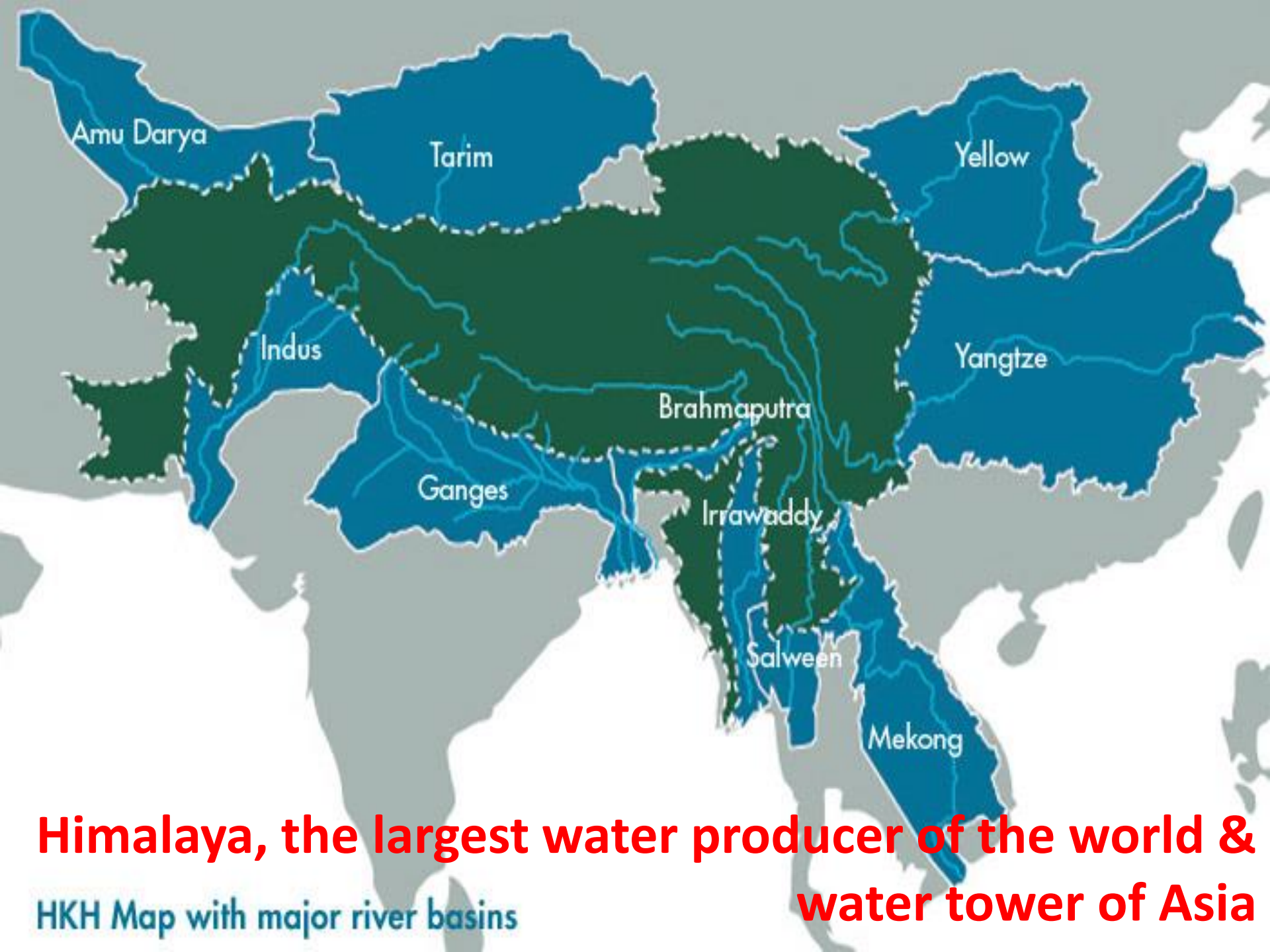
## **the Mountain of Diversity**

- The Himalaya has been mentioned in many writings, both ancient and modern, scientific and literary, over thousands of years.
- The geographical area covered by this vast mountain range has not been very clearly identified. This need was also not felt by the mountain communities. Efforts to map the Himalaya as a macro entity are recent



# Himalaya – the Land - 1

- The Himalayan region (including the Hindu Kush mountain) named as the HKH region, covers an area of 4,192,000 sq. km, spread over Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.



**Himalaya, the largest water producer of the world & water tower of Asia**

HKH Map with major river basins

# Himalaya – the Land - 2

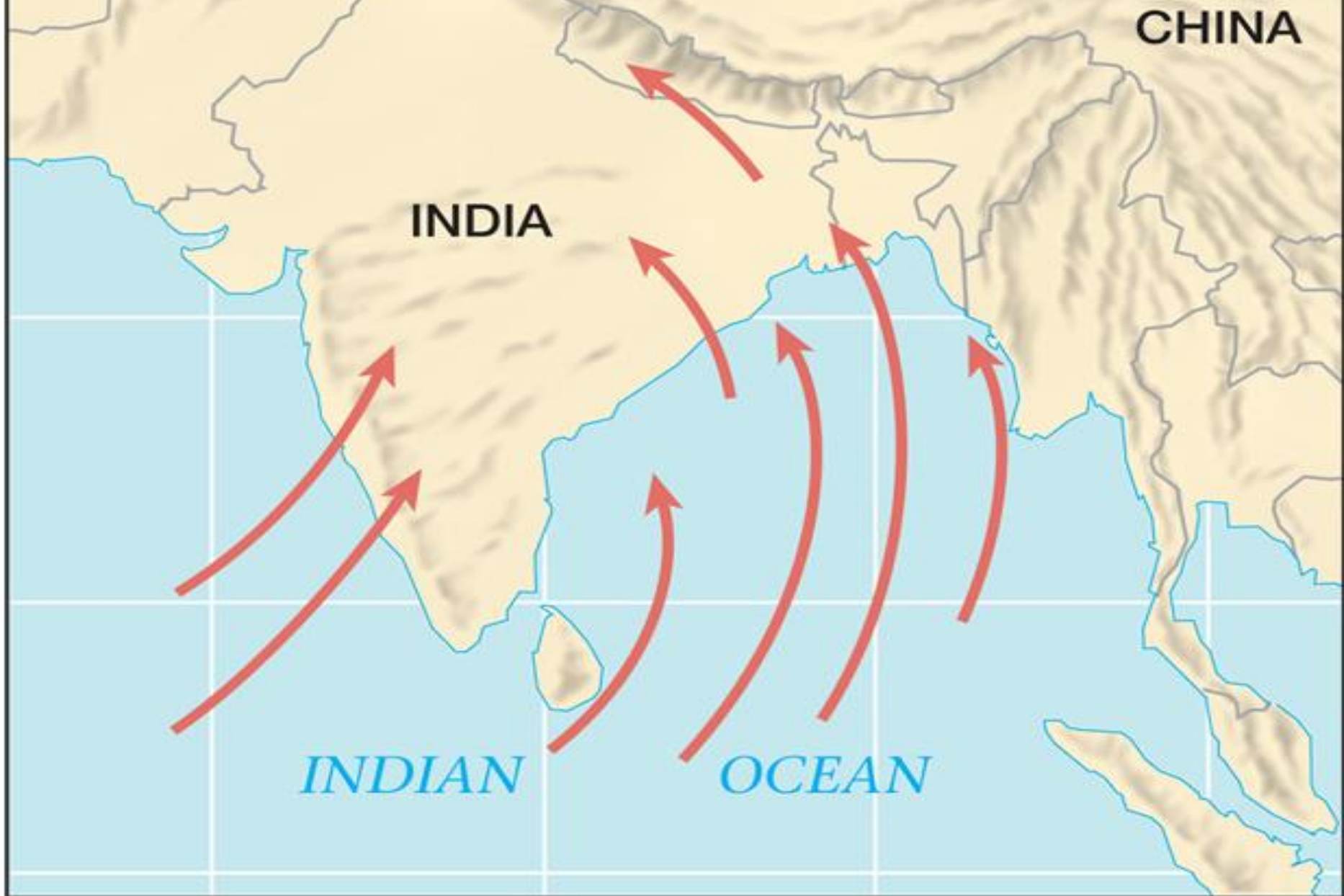
- It also has the highest peak on Earth at 8848 masl. It is known by names as **Sagarmatha/Chomolungma/Mt Everest**
- Calculation of the altitude of the peak was first made by **Sikdar**, an expert on trigonometric survey, with the Survey of India. However, the name of the peak went after his boss, **George Everest.**

# Himalaya – the people

- Population distribution is very uneven with the densely populated southern aspect, in which Bhutan, Nepal and large areas in India come, often getting described as the Himalaya (social sc)
- The Himalaya has a very rich ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. It has people who are atheists or follow Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, among others.

# **Himalaya – the perceptions of the macro- & the micro- are meeting**

- While the larger area of The Himalaya is of interest to geographers/geologists development financiers or geo-political analysts, etc., a Himalayan community may mean by this name a small part of the large, an area they need for their livelihood. Thus, thousands of **‘micro-Himalaya’** live in the **‘macro-Himalaya’**



**The path of the monsoon & the Himalaya**  
**Summer**

# Himalaya – the Livelihoods

- The larger part of the Himalaya, the Trans-Himalaya, constituted by Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has an average precipitation of about 175 mm/yr making pastoralism as the main livelihood option.
- Much smaller, but with ample rainfall & much higher density of population, the southern aspect, has agri-pastoralism as the main livelihood option.

**Annual average precipitation in trans-Himalaya is about 175 mms – rivers depend heavily on snow-glacier melt**







**In the southern  
aspect, 175 mm  
rainfall can occur  
in just a few hrs**



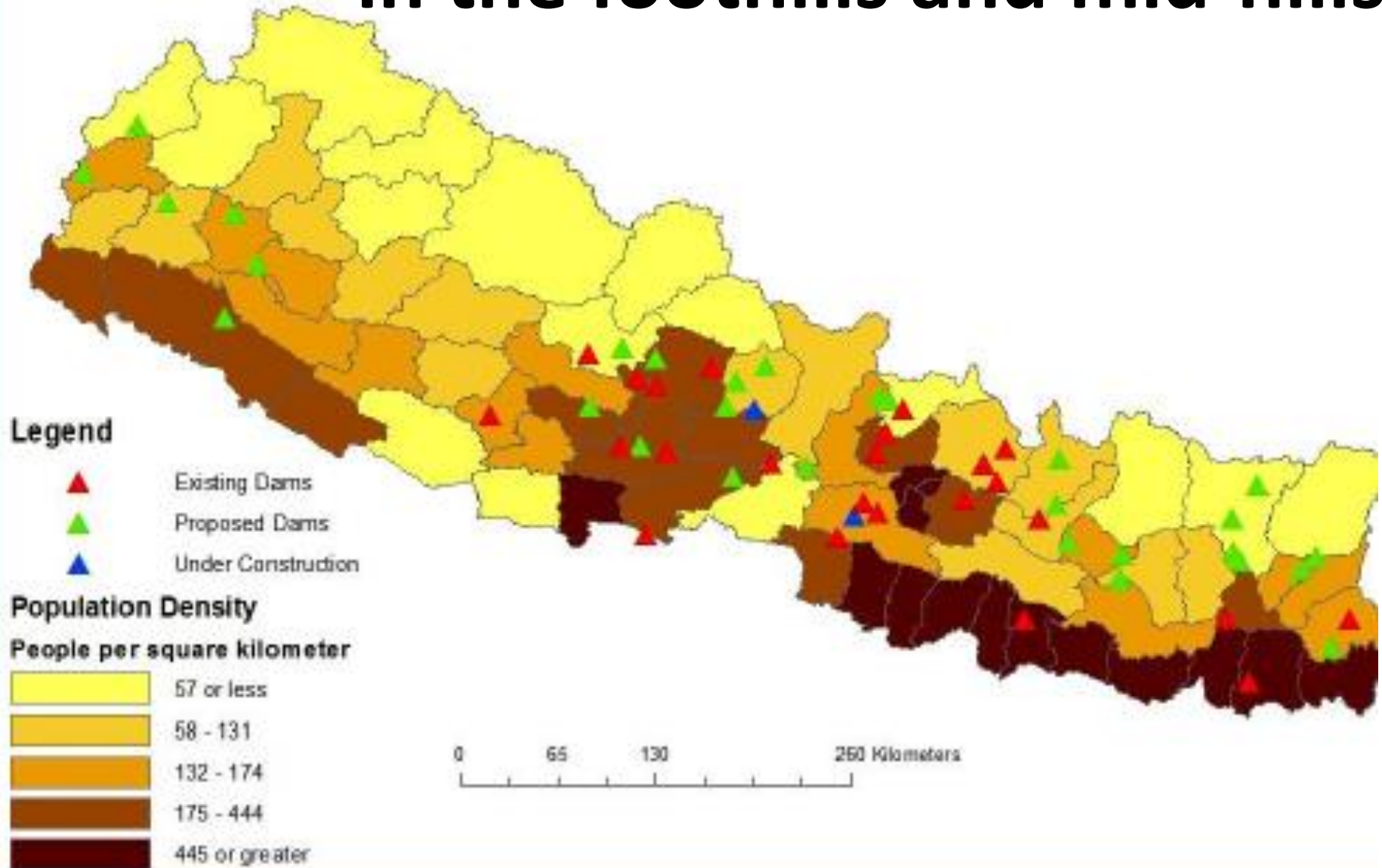
CHINA

NEPAL

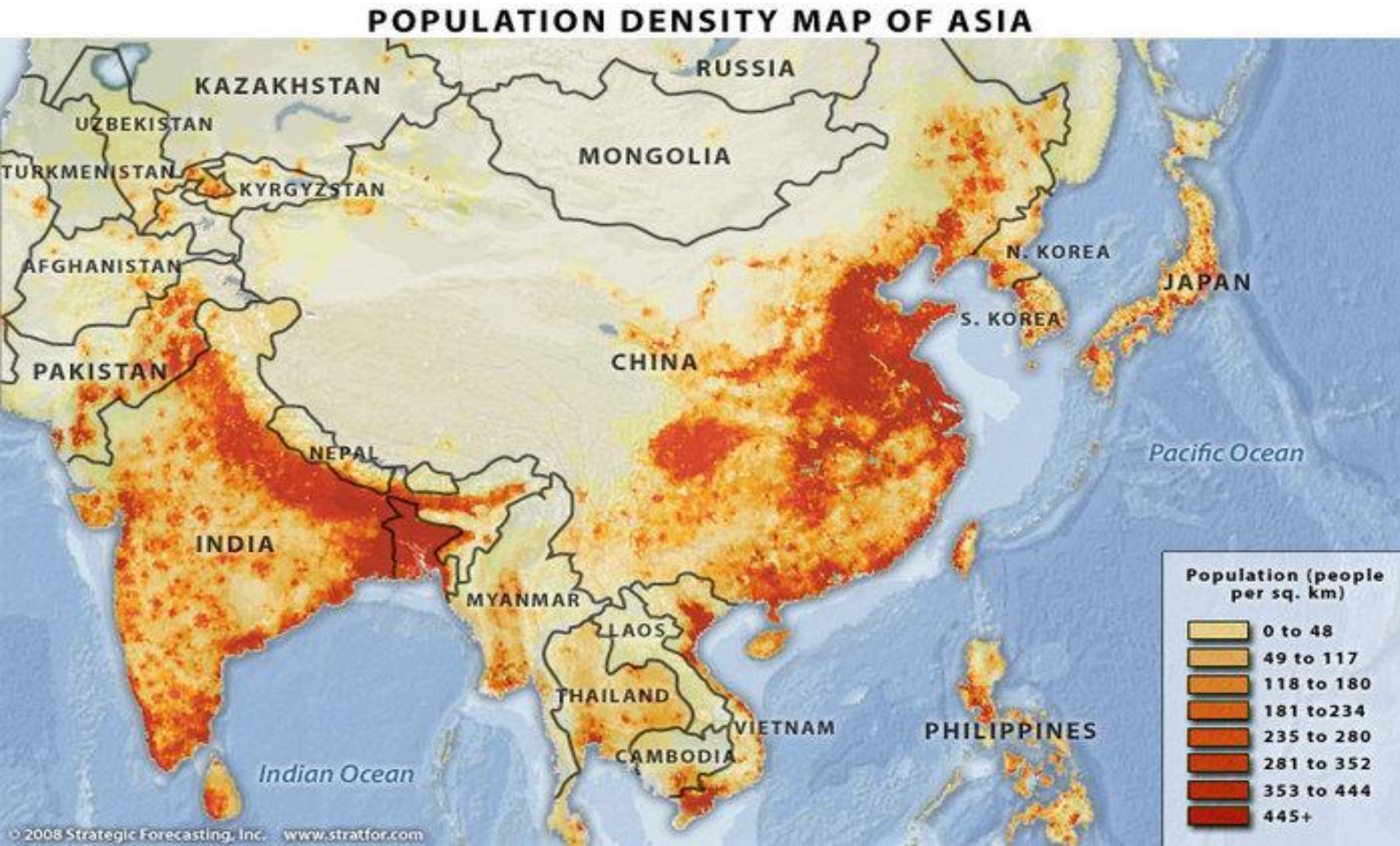
KATHMANDU

INDIA

# Nepal's population is mainly in the foothills and mid-hills



**The uplands are scarcely populated – the foothills and floodplains are very dense**



# Monument in Lanzhou for Huang He (Yellow River) as Mother River of China



# Provisioning services of river Ganges in S Asia made it revered as mother river



# **Accessibility with Roads/Rails Communication & the Market**

- The Himalayan communities had used, for centuries, human and animal muscle power for farming and transportation, thus limiting the level of exchange with other mountain communities or the plains
- Mechanical transportation/electronic communication in the Himalaya has given access to market forces in interior areas and shaped people's aspirations







# **Accessibility, Urbanization**

## **Inequity and Unsustainability**

- **The most significant transformation taking place in the Himalayan areas is greater accessibility & communication with increased market penetration**
- **How can issues of equity & ecological stability be raised in the minds of the people taking the path of this rapid market based transition**



**Agri-pastoral household in Uttarakhand in Indian Himalaya – habitat not preferred**

The young people want to be part  
of the growing urbanization in the  
**Uttarakhand Himalaya - Dehradun**



# **Cultural Transformation plus Climate Change**

- **Social, cultural, political and economic scenario of the Himalaya (say Nepal & India) is demanding on and neglectful of the natural environment**
  - **Global warming & climate change are realities with serious impacts.**
- However, neither impacts are clearly understood, nor remedial steps ready**

# **Accessibility, Transition & Social Activism in the Himalaya**

- The growing accessibility and reach of the market are making the micro- and the macro-Himalaya meet each other frequently (dams, forests, tourism, etc) often causing situations of dispute and conflicts. Micro-level movements on popular rights on local resources, like forests and water, are up against the macro interventions of State/corporate

# The global market is penetrating into the inaccessible Himalaya

Will the Himalaya be led only by market  
processes or the transition can accept the  
need for equity and ecological stability?