

Issue Of Internal And International Migration In Tarai Region Of Nepal

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INTRODUCTION

A historical prospective on the population of Nepal indicates the important role of migration in changing the population size of different regions. During the census of 1920, the share of the hill region was 65 percent. The share of the tarai region was 35 percent which increased to 46.62 percent during 1991 census. These differential growth rate among the regions was caused mainly by migration from the hills to tarai region. Migration to the tarai seems to have become significant after the late 1950's because of the success of Malaria eradication programme. The heavy dependency of population on agriculture is indicated both by the overwhelming percentage of these engaged in agriculture as well as the destination of migrants.

Four out of five migrants had their destination to the tarai. Emigration and immigration both contributed to regional population size and indicate push and pull factors among regions. The emigrants are predominantly from the hills and the majority have India as their destination. On the other hand, tarai is the destination of most hill migrants as well as migrants from outside the country, be they foreign born or aliens.

Discussion with politicians, journalists, elite people and general public has been done about migration problems. Most of the people think that people migrate into the tarai mostly come from the hills. And some people think that a lot of people immigrate from India to the tarai. They have a feeling that the people who migrate to the tarai region from outside and inside settle there permanently. Most of the tarai people have knowledge about the migration of the population in tarai and think that hill migrants have settled in the rural and urban areas of tarai as well as in the deforested land. They feel that land given by resettlement projects are mainly given to hill migrants and not to landless tarai people and the natives of tarai are exploited both from hill migrants and immigrants from India.

DEFINING INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

One of the major difficulties in the study of migration is the definition of migrants itself. Generally migration is said to occur when a person moves from its place of usual residence to another place. But people

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move temporarily for short time periods and change their place of residence quite often. It is common among animals, birds to change their habitation for certain period and come back to their original place. Such movements are often defined as seasonal. But in the case of human beings, there are different categories of movements such as:

- i. Temporary movement for short periods-tourism pilgrimages and medical treatment.
- ii. Short-term movement-business trips.
- iii. A long-term movement for studies.
- iv. A long-term movement for employment.
- vi. Permanent movement.

In Nepal, the preponderance of emigrants constitutes mostly under the category from I to IV as mentioned above. In the real sense, they are not emigrants because they have not changed or are not likely to abandon their original place or country permanently.

IMMIGRATION FLOW IN TARAI

An impression is being created that a substantial section of the tarai population consists of immigration from India, but it is far from the reality. The majority of the *madheshi* people are indigenous, i.e. native. These people have always been there on this land and they have their own identity.

After the eradication of Malaria during the middle of 20th century, the immigration of people from across the border in India as well from such states as Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh increased, and migrants from hill to tarai also increased. But after the imposition of citizenship in Nepal, the prospective flow of India immigrants in Nepal tarai restricted. That there has been a considerable shift of population from the Nepali hills to the tarai and not so much from India to the tarai.

From 1950s the migration of population started from the hills to the tarai. Factors like population pressure, scarcity of arable land, limited food production, under employment / unemployment and indebtedness in the hill were some of the push factors responsible for the migration of the population to the tarai. On the other hand, apart from the eradication of Malaria, planned resettlement, prospect of employment opportunities were some of the pull factors that encouraged migration to the tarai.

Agricultural labourers are not coming now but skilled labourers come from India to Nepalese towns. Rickshawpullers, watch makers, grill makers, painters hotel labours, body builders of bus and trucks, mason etc. are coming from India to Nepal tarai for jobs. The data given in Table 1 and Table 2 show the immigrants from India to tarai region, specially in Janakpur for different jobs.

Table 1
Indian Labour Working in Dhanusa Janakpur

Shops	Total Number of Shops and Workers	Indian owned shops and Workers
Hotel	60 (1200 workers)	20 (600 workers)
Pan Pasal	250	100
Tailoring house	50 (500 workers)	25 (250 workers)
Medicine Pasal	150 (600 workers)	20 (150 workers)
Grocery (Kirana)	800 (2400 workers)	200 (600 workers)

Source : Field Survey by the Author 1999.

Indians come to tarai for marriage also. Out of total migrants from India 35 percent has been due to marriage. The data in Table 2 given below show the immigrants from India by frequency of marriage.

Table 2
Inflow Through marriage in Janakpur 1999.

Total No. of marriage	Marriage with Indians
100	50

Source : Field Survey by the Author 1999.

This shows that the 50 percent immigrant problems in tarai regions is of the marriage held with Indians.

EMIGRATION FROM NEPAL TARAI TO INDIA

Migration of the population has created imbalances in the tarai. As a result, many of the native people are forced to migrate outside in search of jobs during certain seasons. There are also people who migrate and settle in India permanently. Until 1970s there had been a seasonal migration population from the adjoining regions of Bengal, Bihar and U.P. states of India to the tarai. The Indian labourers helped to cultivate and harvest agricultural crops. But the labourers from across the border stopped coming to Nepal because of the new development opportunities in several parts of India, particularly in Punjab and Haryana states. Now this purpose is reversed. It is the tarai labourers who now go to the different parts of India, in certain seasons for employment mainly in the agricultural sector. The wages earned by the tarai labourers in India is higher than what they could usually get in Nepal.

In additiona, tarai people like the *tharus* and *satars* were emmigrated to India permantely. Thousand of *tharus* from Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur were migrated to India as a result of the *kamaiya* (bonded

labour) system. There was also a large scale migration of the *tharus* from Chitwan district to the regions across the Nepal-India border. Many *satars* and other tribal population of Jhapa were also migrated to India. Lakhimpur constituency of Uttar Pradesh state in India is one of such destinations of the *tharu* migrants. Likewise, Champaran district in Bihar state has sheltered the *tharus* migrated from Chitwan district. The *santhal* district in Bihar has become the home of *satar* migrants from Jhapa district.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION IN TARAI

Many people in tarai feel that migration of population to tarai from outside and inside adversely affects the socio-economic and environmental conditions in the tarai. The migrants tilled unclaimed and fallow land and this created problem of pasture land. Besides, the migration also caused the shortage of cultivable land. One of the impacts of the migration is the shortage of herbs, fuelwood and timber as there is no more forest to meet their supply. This affected the source of income of these local people who by tradition sold such forest products in the market. It has also added to their unemployment problem.

The migration of population from hills to tarai as well as from across the border brought changes in the social make-up of the population. The migration of population to tarai has raised ethnic issues. The changes in the distribution of languages by region provides some indication of migration pattern of the various ethnic groups. The percentage of Nepali speakers increased in all regions in the tarai. It means large scale shift of hill migrants to the tarai where the earlier dominant language used to be Maithili, Bhojpuri and Awadhi. Because of the hill migrants, the share of Maithili, Bhojpuri and Awadhi declined in tarai region.

The increase in Hindu population was due both to migration of hill Hindu castes and Hindu immigrants from India. Increase in Muslim population was due to foreign immigrants. Increase in Buddhists population was due to hill migrants. The composition of tarai population by religious groups also provide indication of immigration and interregional migration. The tarai region, with its vastly increased population is presently undergoing much social, cultural and economic change. Because of the over-strain on the use of natural resource, such as forest, agricultural land, environment, there has been shortage of rainfall, decline in fertility of soil, irregular monsoon and desertification in several parts of the tarai. These problems emerged due to migration problems.

The author conducted the field survey of Dhanusha, Mahottari and Sarlahi districts of tarai region with group discussion with C.D.O., D.D.C. chairman, chairman of Nagarpalika, chief tax officer, chairman of chamber of commerce and industry, journalists, industrialists and elite people

focusing on international migration in Nepal, specially its impact on tarai population and its economy with questionnaire.

The conclusion of the discussion was that the flow of Indian migrants in tarai has decreased because of imposition of citizenship certificate distribution in Nepal. And another factors are green revolution in agriculture and industrialisation in India. Without citizenship no one can purchase land and can make house. The economic development of India also harassed the Indian migrants in Nepal. In spite of all these, Indians are coming but at small scale. Now they are not coming for agricultural works but they are coming for business purpose. They are skilled and have technical knowledge therefore, they work in technical area. Mostly they are engaged in furniture industry, hardware, brick making job, tailoring, rickshaw driving, bus-truck body building, work in saw mills, shop etc. Most of them return home, only a few of them live there, specially who have relatives in this region. Many Indians are working in business but the business or the shops are registered in the name of their Nepali relatives.

Nepalese people specially tarai people are going to Indian states i.e. Punjab, Haryana, Asam, Delhi, West Bengal for agricultural works and other labour based works. Tarai people are going for seasonal work, they return home after earning money but they go every year for seasonal work.

By marriage Indian girls are coming in tarai and tarain girls are going to India. But the percentage of Indian girls coming in tarai are higher. About 60 percent percent Indian girls are coming by marriage and 40 percent tarain girls are going to India. (Lal 1999).

Most of tarai people think that open border policy should continue because it is beneficial for tarai people and fulfills many daily necessities of the tarai people. Social relation, cultural relation also compel that the border should be open between both countries. From security view point there is some problem arising due to open border and there is deficit in government revenue also. Therefore, they feel that open border should be regulated so that it becomes beneficial for tarai people economically and for business and industry.

The population of tarai is affected both by internal migration from hill and international migration from India. Some of the tarai people think that hill migrants only affect the tarai population. Indian migrants do not affect the culture, language and custom of tarai. Because the culture, language and custom of the tarai and Indian border states are same. They think that to some extent it is affected by hill migrants. But some people think that the economy of the tarai is exploited by both the Indian migrants and the hill migrants.

REGULATION OF MIGRATION

Since emigration or immigration may not be beneficial for the country's economic development and national integration process for the

long term perspective, a mechanism to regulate and discourage such movements should be developed at the national level.

Though an open border is one of the factors for contributing the movement of peoples, it is not the sole factor for international migration. The basic cause is poverty of people and periodic developmental plans which are not directed for the people at the grassroot level. Therefore, one of the major solutions for reducing the migration flow is to stress on local development.

Some of the immediate actions that the government can start to reduce migration are:

- Initiate the commercial activities viable to local resources.
- Motivate the local population for development of one's own locality.
- Vocational and skills development programmes should be launched.

However, before launching such programmes, first of all, assessment of needs of population, potential natural and human resources of the local area, and market for goods and services produced should be identified.

CONCLUSION

The population of Nepal indicates the important role of migration in changing the population size of tarai region. The share of tarai population has increased mainly because of migration from hills to tarai and immigration to tarai from abroad. Due to migration problem, many of the native people of tarai are forced to emigrate outside in search of jobs. From the discussions with different classes of society it is indicated that migration of population to tarai from outside and inside had adversely affected the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the region. One of the main cause of migration problem is poverty, therefore, poverty alleviation programme and local development programme should be launched strictly. One of the major recommendations given is to regulate the open border but not to close.

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ANNEX

Table 1
Citizenship Distributed In Dhanusha District

	According to Birth	Angikrit Accord to Marriage	Citizenship According to the Family of Officials	Hereditary	Total
Citizenship Distributed till Kartik, 2053	4988	14,722	361	216417	236488

Source : District Administration Office, Dhanusha.

Table 2
Business Registered From 2031 to 2053 Mangsir

1.	Total Registered Business	-	8140
2.	Dead Business Among 8140	-	4140
3.	Running Business	-	4000
4.	Among 4000, Registered in the Name of Indian	-	26

Source : Tax Office, Janakpur.

Table 3
Registered Industries Till 2053 Mangsir

1.	Total Registered Industries	-	1923
2.	Registered Industries from Central office for Dhanusha	-	677
	Total	-	2600
3.	About 15000 labouress are working in 2600 industries		
4.	Among 15000 labouress about 10 to 12 percent are Indian.		

Source : Office of the Small & Cottage Industry, Dhanusha.

Table 4
Citizenship Distributed In Mahottari District

	Hereditary+ According to Birth	Angikrit According to Marriage	Total
Citizenship Distributed till Kartik, 2053	1,37,731	932	1,38,663

Source : District Administrative Office, Sarlahi.

Table 6
Business Registered Till 2053 Paush

1.	Total Registered Business	-	2799
2.	Among 2799, registered in the name of Indian	-	42

Source : Tax Office, Malangwa Sarlahi.