

Transnationalism in Joshi's *Shramatan*

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Abstract

This article analyses how Bn Joshi's nonfiction *Shramatan* presents the life of people in Gulf countries. The study is essential to understand about Nepali youths' involvement in foreign employment and changes they have in themselves after they return the homeland from host land. This article inquires what compels Nepali youths to leave the country and how they get changes in themselves after transnational migration. The major objectives of the study are to trace the causes of transnational migration of Nepali youths, show the relationship between homeland and host land and record the various transformations that result from the transnational migration in the lives of migrants. The theoretical perspective on transnationalism by Levitt, Jaworsky, Vertovec and Faist and Fauser is the basis of research in the article. The major finding is that transnational migration results in economic, political, social, cultural and psychological transformation in the life of migrants. The study concludes that lack of opportunity is the major cause of transnational migration and transnationalism transforms the migrants' life internally and externally. Similarly, transnational migrants develop some relationship with the society of host land. Further research is essential on this nonfiction that from the point of view of diaspora.

Keywords: Diaspora, foreign employment, homeland, host land, migrant, transnationalism

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Introduction

Nepali society has transnational relation because the youths from Nepal go around the world for finding employment. Basch et al. (1994) initially defined transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 6). Because of mining of gasoline, Gulf countries have become rich and they need labors from under developed countries. Youths who have lack of skill and technical education begin to go to Gulf countries for employment. Then they develop the link between host land and home land. *Shramatan* tells the experiences of Bn Joshi and many other Nepali youths who travel across the border frequently and reach Gulf countries for employment. They make Gulf countries home away from home and they develop relationship with people there.

Shramatan is a nonfiction and there are three major divisions in it. They are *Tyo Bhirne Jholaa*, *Punarjiwan* and *Safar*. In *Punarjiwan* section, some other essays titled *Unmaat*, *Nigraha*, *Thaatiko baas*, *Aapko Bhaat*, *Punarjiwan*, *Uddaar*, *Amuk haanso*, *Golden Bangkok Guesthouse*, *Somakit* and *Bismaat* are included. Under the heading *Safar*, essays included are *Aaut Jail*, *Sukuti*, *Uddaa Uddai Uddyo Dedh Lakh*, *Dina Sulobha*, *Gadbade Govind* and *Sudur Suskera*. This

nonfiction presents the experiences of Joshi and many other youths who go foreign land for employment. In the hill side of Nepal, youths have dream to join Gorkha soldier. This dream has more than two hundred years' history. Elijah (2013) records "The two-hundred-year history of the British Gurkhas officially began in 1815 with the Anglo Nepalese War" (p. 8). This study shows that employment problem is the main cause of Nepali youths' transnational migration and they have economic, political, social, cultural, and psychological transformation after the migration.

Problem, Objectives and Methodology

In *Shramatan*, Joshi raises an issue of youths' problems in foreign land and shows how youths face death at each step. The writer has gone to foreign land time to time and collected much experiences of transnational migration. Joshi from Tanahu is a traveler; he has travelled many countries for ten years. Nepali youths have compulsion to fly away for economic opportunity that transforms them. *Shramatan* has been the collection of writer's experiences and feelings that he has had due to transnational migration. The study focuses on the relation developed between host land and home land by youths' transnational migration. For the purpose, the following questions are raised:

What relation is developed between homeland and host land' society due to transnational migration?

How do transnational families transform after transnational migration?

Why do Nepali youths choose transnational migration?

The major objectives of the research are to mark the relationship between homeland and host land due to transnational migration, to find out various changes seen in the lives of transnational families and to record the causes of transnational migration. For it, the theoretical tools developed by Levitt and Jaworsky, Vertovec and Faist and Fauser are used. Levitt and Jaworsky explains, "Migration has never been a one-way process of assimilation into a melting pot or a multicultural salad bowl but one in which migrants, to varying degrees, are simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and layers of the transnational social fields in which they live" (p. 130). Regarding transnational migrants, they claim that "economic, political, social, cultural, and religious life are transformed when they are enacted transnationally" (p. 130). The study shows some of these transformations after transnational migration in the youths of Nepal mentioned in *Shramatan*.

Vertovec explains that remittance is the major reason of transnational migration. He explains that migrants do not think about the borders and laws while they go across the international borders for employment. They develop certain kind of relationship and broaden the planet. Vertovec (2009) defines transnationalism as "a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders (and all the laws, regulations and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common – however virtual – arena of activity" (p. 3). Faist and Fauser gives more importance in interconnection between two societies due to transnationalism. He (2011) defines a transnational perspective as "one which captures both the cross-border ties and engagements these actors sustain and the role played by institutions on the

local, national and global level, including international organizations such as the World Bank, national states and organizations in development cooperation” (p. 1). The study develops conceptual framework by relating individual and institutional bond between two countries, remittance as the major cause of transnational migration and various transformations in transnational families.

Results and Discussion

Internal migration is not new for Nepali people. The natural disaster and many other reasons compel people to migrate from their birth place. Joshi has to leave his birth place Chhang Hatiya due to epidemics in the village. Many people have been killed and they have been displaced. Joshi sees many of his relatives returning from India. It has much effect in his mind. It affects the society invisibly and inspires to seek job across the border. Joshi later he is able to go abroad with that experience. Living in the cities of India, he has grown self-confidence. He has to work very hard from the childhood at home. He works in the field, goes to the school and cooks rice at home also. He listens about metro cities of India and one day he goes to India with one of the families from his village. The family has been of Thuldai.

Joshi decides to leave the country when he does not find any option to have the source of income. He contacts man power agents for going abroad. Generally, man power companies cheat Nepali youths and it adds mental stress to the migrant in the foreign land. Barmeli agent takes four hundred dollars to Joshi and some other people for crossing the border and entering into Malaysia ((p. 19). However, they suffer a lot and reach into the prison of Malaysia. Joshi, Dipak, Gurung and Limbu empty their pocket paying the agents in the foreign land to cross the border. Joshi, Padam, Gurung, Limbu and Dipak suffer mentally and physically while crossing the border of Thailand and entering into Malaysia illegally. They have been anxious of life as they can be killed in the forest or sea of Malaysia. They can be the victim of wild animals or the waves of the sea. They find the wild mango for the survival (p.78). They realize that their anger has been rising because of irritation. They have suffered so much that their power of endurance has faded away. Mental tension and harassment have crossed the border of patience (Joshi 81). Joshi feels that he has been agitated and irritated even in the tiny matters (p. 81). Joshi narrates that in the very hot forest of Malaysia they try to sleep but cannot. They pass the night in terror and sleeplessness (p. 83). They even cry loudly when they feel that they cannot survive (p. 91). Joshi and Dipak almost lose their life in the sea before they are rescued. The suffering in the transnational migration invites the mental stress to the migrants.

Lack of opportunities and the economic crisis was another cause of the transnational migration. Many youths got involved in Maoists’ revolution and left schools and colleges. They could not get job as they had no education. Joshi and many others have to choose the foreign employment because of the economic crisis in the family. B N Joshi decides to go to foreign employment because of scarcity and compulsion. Lack of opportunity in the country compels B N Joshi to go to the foreign land (p. 11).

Causes of Transnational Migration in Nepal

Joshi decides to go to foreign employment because of scarcity and compulsion. Lack of opportunity in the country compels Joshi to go to the foreign land. He confesses that he has to think

about transnational migration because of “Shortage. Compulsion. But not hobby” (p. 11). Gardner claims, “Remittances generated by this migration are used to buoy families’ basic consumption, as the seed money for entrepreneurial activities, to fund the education of migrants’ siblings or children, and in South Asian society, for the dowries of migrants’ sisters or daughters” (2011, p. 14). Joshi gets tempted by the remittance and attempts to build future by going abroad. He quits his study in the middle and begins to search the man power agencies in the village.

Getting visa of Gulf countries is very easy as agents of man power companies visit in the remote villages and meet youths to interact and convince them for foreign employment. Because of this, many youths get influenced and are driven to foreign employment. Joshi finds agents who send youths to foreign employment in his village by the help of friends (p. 11). Jit Bahadur’s friend Nirajan has informed him how agents of man power company can do everything for interested youth. He makes some candidates like Ram, Narendra, Jagat and Jiwan ready for foreign employment and the owner of man power company visited his home town for their interview. Jit Bahadur faces interview and finds it very easy. The youths do not have to pay heavy amount in the beginning.

Imitating others is another cause of transnational migration. From childhood, Nepalese find relatives and neighbors as well as friends going abroad for earning money. This is mainly for earning money. Joshi accepts, “Friends’ relation has dragged me to the agents’ of foreign company” (p. 11). But he does not have to go to abroad if he has got opportunity in the country. He asks, “Is it the society or the state that could not understand the importance of education? The family has just become illiterate. Why can't our state provide jobs that foreign countries can provide?” (p. 10). He looks at the sands of desert in Gulf and wishes he would have taken birth there.

Transformations by Transnational Migration

Transnational migration changes the migrants in many areas like their economy, culture, social relation, politics and psychology.

Economic Transformation

The longing to go abroad on a ship stopped Joshi’s studies in the middle. It gave rest to the ups and downs of the turbulent age of two decades. He is trapped in the net of transnational migration for remittance. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) claim that “For one thing, many non-industrialized countries have become economically dependent on the remittances migrants send and have put into play a range of policies and incentives to ensure they continue” (p. 133). Joshi inquires, “Is it the society or the state that could not understand the importance of education? The family has just become illiterate. Why can't our state provide jobs that foreign countries can provide?” (p. 11). Joshi has seen Nepali youths going for British army to be *lahure*. He remembers, “I had seen the Gallawals coming from time to time to the villages to recruit Gurkhas. He used to bring the youths when he was eating” (p. 11). Joshi states, “But in recent times, agents have started appearing to take workers to the Gulf countries of the Middle East. Even though the job sequence was the same, the Gorkhas would not have to pay money for Lahure, but they used to pick up money to go to the Gulf” (p. 11). It makes the youths easy to go Gulf countries for earning money.

Joshi claims that transnational migration of Nepali youths has long history. He explains, “Although I and my generation have been experiencing the problem of foreign employment for several decades, its history is very long. The practice of going to India for labor is centuries old. This practice is still the same in western Nepal” (p. 212). He writes, “Seven-eight hundred years ago, Nepali youth spent months and reached the Bhot of that time and then the vast Sichang, i.e. Tibet. One living witness of that is the 'Munamadan' Khand Kavya (chaptered poem)” (p. 212). Now Nepali youths go to Gulf countries, other Asian countries like Japan and Korea and even Europe and America. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) point out that “Because 40% of the world’s labor migrants move from one developing country to another (particularly in Asia), it is important to look at subregional contexts” (p. 135). Getting employment and earning money is the main aim of going abroad for youths in Nepal.

Going Gulf country is very easy as agents from companies are available in the remote areas of Nepal also. They come to the villages of hillside and terai and lure youths for foreign employment. Gardner views “Employers and manpower agencies in the Gulf States work directly with labor brokers located in the sending countries. These labor brokers—in Kathmandu, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Bombay, Columbo, and other large cities in South Asia—work with a constellation of satellite offices in smaller cities and towns” (2011, p. 9). Joshi explains that many villages of Nepal are empty due to foreign employment. He mentions, “The rural areas have somehow become devoid of youth. There are only the elderly, helpless, disabled and children in the village. Young manpower has been recruited as risky workers in various countries. It is well known that Nepalese youth are only used for difficult work that their citizens do not want to do” (p. 213). Young males’ absence from rural areas causes many problems and fertile land has changed into barren land. Gardner points out that “In some regions of South Asia, large portions of the young male population are absent. This was particularly apparent in one of my village visits in the Terai of southern Nepal” (2011, p. 15). However, the country is finding new destination for employment but not generating employment for youths. Joshi complains, “the government is eager to open new cheap labor market and export youth in abroad instead of generating employment in the country” (p. 213). The result is terrible, many youths return in wooden box from abroad.

Gardner remarks that transnational migration is not easy but remittance help migrants to forget the pain. Many countries in South Asia earn foreign currency from remittance. Gardner points out that “Although many migrants encounter significant problems in the Gulf States, remittances from the Gulf are undeniably central to the economic activities of countless communities in the Indian Ocean world” (2011, p. 14). Joshi and his friends also enjoy shopping in duty free shop at airport to bring gift and essential things at home. Their earning they take to their home and spend for different purposes. They search new destination to go for employment again. Joshi tries to begin a business in Nepal but is unsuccessful. He collects two lakh rupees and attempts to start plywood shop. But he is not successful. He plans to enter Philippines and gets tourist visa of one month. But he is caught in Manila airport and sent back. Nepali youths have compulsion to choose transnational migration but they face huge challenges in foreign land because of Nepali passport’s low value. Joshi is caught in Manila airport because he has Nepali passport and they have been keeping eyes on Nepali youths.

Many youths go to foreign land to fulfill dreams of earning money and becoming independent. Osella and Osella (2000) argue that “Cash is then a signifier of masculine status, notes reckoning the worth of a man. This relation between men and money can be traced in several directions” (p. 122). It is true to Govind’s life also, Joshi’s second brother. He has been a driver in Nepal and decides to go foreign land to be a driver. He dreams to earn money and buy a bus to earn money. However, he dies in foreign land and his dead body is parceled in wooden box. To be a man and do personal business pushes Govind in the mouth of death.

Social Transformation

Transnational migration brings some changes socially also. Foreign women seduce youths in abroad. Joshi faces the same situation as a woman tries to seduce him, “Oops.... I blew mouth. Felt bad smell in nose. She has heavily drunk. She stopped kissing the neck when I retaliated and she tried to caress me by taking out her tongue. She has begun to seduce. It was hard for me to bear it” (p. 114). Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) argue that “Transnational migration scholarship has also identified striking changes in social life, documenting transformations in kinship and family structure and how these inform constructions of class, gender, and race” (p. 137). Joshi has developed relationship with a Thai girl Somkit. Her sister Kob has relationship with Kiran, Joshi’s friend. Those who have spouse in Nepal also begin living together with opposite sex in abroad.

Joshi and his friend Kiran have relationship with two sisters called Somkit and Kob respectively. Joshi recalls, “As time progressed, I directly experienced that he had a relationship with a Thai girl, which was like a husband and wife. Sometimes all three of us used to go for a walk together. At that time, I used to see the twisted form of couple love” (p. 134). Joshi remembers, “Kiran used to call her wife most of the time. The closeness seen in their behavior towards each other gave the impression that they were in deep love. If Kiran sometimes raised the issue of returning to Nepal, the girl would get very angry” (p. 134). Osella and Osella (2000) admit that “The process of transformation of the migrant into a patron runs concomitant with and shares similar predicaments with the growth-cycle into manhood” (p. 129). Dipak involves in the sexual intercourse without a condom with a girl from night club in Bangkok and has syphilis (p. 57).

Joshi has been in abroad for earning money. Osella and Osella (2000) claim “Unlike other types, Gulf migration offers to some the chance of rapid and vast accumulation of wealth by village standards” (p. 119). Joshi knows he cannot live there forever. Osella and Osella further explain that “Gulf migrants cannot settle away but must, sooner or later, return home, where their newfound wealth and access to consumption may dramatically alter their status and their relationships with others, and offer them the chance to forge new identities” (p. 119). However, Somkit does not know that Joshi returns sooner or later. Osella and Osella (2000) clarify that “In the mainstream among men of all communities with an eye for local status and power games, the accumulation of wealth and its display and mobilization in (often expensive) prestige enhancing spending activities go hand in hand” (p. 121). Joshi mentions:

I know clearly, the period of my love cannot be long. The heart is tormented even more. Maybe she doesn't know about it. I was spending some time with the aim of curing my pains with the help of Rishav Dai. Involuntarily, I am realizing that the relationship with

Somkit would make me carry more pain. Why is she getting closer to me without understanding all this? Even I was not able to adapt to this new event in life. (p. 143)

Joshi realizes that his love cannot last long but Somkit is unknown about it.

Political Transformation

Transnational migration brings political awareness in migrants. They learn new thing and see development and face new environment. They fight with the authority for their rights also. Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) asserts that “Migrants (and refugees) may mobilize around a whole host of issues, the main types of which are immigrant politics, homeland politics, emigrant politics, diaspora politics and trans local politics. Immigrant politics are the political activities that migrants and refugees undertake to better their situation in the receiving country, such as obtaining more political, social and economic rights, fighting discrimination and the like” (p. 762). Joshi and his friends raise their voice against the injustice and unfairness. Joshi claims, “We have spoken for the welfare of all that has been illegal in the eyes of company and or the law of that nation think them criminals” (p. 172). However, he has been happy as many workers have been in favor of them. Joshi writes, ‘This will be a great lesson to general manager Imanuel Turk’ (p. 172). Joshi has to return from out jail and the police leave them at the airport to deport. Nepali youths fight for the rights where ever they reach and whatever condition they live in.

Sometimes Nepali youths take part in strike in the companies of Gulf countries. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) describe “Migrants’ political transnational practices include a variety of activities such as electoral participation (either as voters or as candidates), membership in political associations, parties or campaigns in two different countries, lobbying the authorities of one country to influence its policies toward another, and nation building itself” (p. 136). However, they suffer from imprisonment and punishment in the foreign land. Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) explains that “The field of migrants’ transnational practices encompasses a wide range of phenomena such as transnational election campaigns and cross-border voting, migrants’ rallies against injustice in the country of origin or demonstrations to defend it, or engagement in hometown associations’ projects in the region of origin” (p. 761). Living in the foreign land, migrants take interest in the national political issues and election. They even affect the election results through campaigns by social media. They see the development of foreign land and get frustrated by thinking about the leaders of the country. Then they get united and begin campaign. This political transformation is the result of transnational migration.

Cultural Transformation

In abroad, migrants come in contact with cross-cultural people and they learn about others’ culture and tradition. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) claim that “The power of art and culture allows migrants to express, create, remember, and recreate identity, whether individually or collectively, whether national or hybrid” (p. 140). In prison of Malaysia, Joshi meets people from other countries also. One Tamil has been singing Hindi songs but he does not speak Hindi language. He is surprised how he has been influenced by Hindi music. All prisoners have to live naked in the prison. Joshi finds the rich country’s poor heart (p. 45). The police have also varied behavior. Some have been

very cruel and few have been loyal also. Joshi finds Malaysian's culture in them. They have opposite culture and behavior (p. 45). Joshi narrates that there have been main three types of people in Malaysia- Chinese origin, Indian origin and local Malays. Malays have been arrogant and their behavior has been wicked. They have not been civilized people. Therefore. The governmental high positions have been filled with people of Chinese and Indian origin. Nepali youths learn about the culture of people in Malaysia and begins to act accordingly.

Joshi, Dipak, Limbu and Gurung Dai learn to live in inhospitable condition sooner or later. Joshi writes, "An increasingly significant channel for the flow of cultural phenomena and the transformation of identity is through global media and communications" (p. 7). But they have to go across the border between Thailand and Malaysia through the deep forest. They cannot get any newspaper or magazines. They have suffered so much that they can neither have a sleep nor have food in terrible forest. Then they transform themselves in to a new culture, the old culture of stone age. They sleep in forest under trees and huts. They find mangoes in the forest at night and eat it as rice. In prison, they have learnt language of Malaysia and that helps them to find water in forest. In the forest, they meet two Malays whom they ask about water in Malay. They ask, "Aaya taada, aaya taada?" [Isn't there water, isn't there water?] (p. 79). They show them where water is and they get new life. They have been learning to survive in the forest amid the wild animals.

Although they have such a terrible situation in Malaysia, they have been confident to stay there. They cannot think about returning the country because they are male beings and they feel uncomfortable to return home empty handed. They must earn money and they have no alternative. Osella and Osella (2000) clarify "What helps make migration particularly relevant to masculinity is an enhanced relationship with money, a detachable form of masculine potency, and a means of exerting agency at a distance. As liquidity, as power, as flowing substance (dravya), as means to enjoyment (bhoga) and to support of dependents, cash holds an important place in South India as a central aspect of prestigious non-renunciatory styles of manhood" (p. 128). This idea makes their mind and body strong enough to change them and develop new way of life in new situation.

Psychological Transformation

Transnational migration makes a person mentally weak and physically fragile. Joshi and his friends are caught in Malaysia and placed in prison. Joshi remembers how they have been scared, "The officer was just shaking his head as I spoke. My heart was scared at times. Because, I had talked a little bit. But all that was the demand of the situation" (p.39). In that difficult situation, Buddha's philosophy saved him, "When I tried to remember the sayings of the Buddha, after all, it doesn't matter if no one is harmed by telling a lie. That word came out spontaneously for the welfare of everyone including me. At this moment, I remembered Lord Gautama Buddha. Where did those words come from? I didn't know myself" (p. 39). Joshi tries to be psychologically strong by recalling Lord Buddha because his condition has been worse.

For Joshi, "Happiness is short-lived by nature, while sorrow is long-term. I remembered these thoughts of Vanabhadd. As a sin of which birth I am tasting the fruits of my life. This is the kind of life one has to live in this foreign country today. I was more tired mentally than physically, even though I was on the cold floor, I leaned against the wall and sat down in a daze" (p. 42). Joshi

tries to comfort himself by looking at the sky and wants to forget his distress. It has not been easy for him to calm down though he attempts by taking long breath and cool air. His illegal entry in Malaysia causes many troubles there and police trap him and his friends in cold cell. Transnational migration is not easy for Nepali youths as they suffer at each step in abroad.

For psychological equilibrium, transnational migrants develop relationship with locals also. Joshi develops friendship with a local girl in Bangkok and Kiran does the same. Joshi confesses, “For the first time in my life, I had such a deep friendship with someone. That too in a foreign land, in a difficult situation. We should just live, many types of days appear in front. Even though Somkit didn't understand the language, it was almost clear through the scenes that she heard the things released by Kiran and told by her sister” (p. 149).

Conclusion

Joshi expresses his experiences and feelings he has collected from transnational migration in *Shramatan*. Joshi and other youths develop social and economic relation between homeland and host land. Many youths' including Joshi's transnational migration is mainly caused by economic crisis. Very few youths go to foreign land due to peer pressure and family pressure. Transnational migration transforms youths financially, culturally, politically, psychologically and socially. Joshi migrants internally due to epidemics and then migrants transnationally due to financial problems. He goes to Malaysia crossing the border of Thailand at night and suffers mentally and physically. He reaches in Malaysia in the second attempt but faces life threatening problems. He is even imprisoned and punished. He returns homeland and again decides to go to Gulf country after being failure in business plan and settlement in Philippines. Transnationalism develops a relation between two societies and countries that help to collect remittance. It is beneficial for both citizen and the country. *Shramatan* is very realistic picture of Nepali youths and their tragic condition in the country and outside. Once they reach the foreign land, they can neither return empty handed because of moral question nor they can stay there peacefully and happily. Lastly, it is recommended that the non-fiction *Shramatan* has to be further studied from diasporic angle.

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