

Conclusion

Nepali migration is a historical phenomenon. Before the colonial regime Nepalis migration to India was sporadic. In the colonial period it became a regular event. Nepali migration to Eastern and Northeastern India as well as into rest of the country was a Colonial phenomenon. The British created the conditions for Nepali migration in India in a great volume. It was directly a colonial sponsored migration. Colonial power for their colonial requirements sponsored such migration. For the protection of empire British appropriated the Nepalis. To counter the Burmese invasion into the Northeast, to establish political hold over the area, to suppress the local tribal groups, to conduct various expeditions against the wild tribes of Northeastern India and to perpetuate their expansionist policy, the British recruited Nepali Gurkhas and sent them into the province. Even for the protection of strategic location of Darjeeling-Sikkim area British wanted to establish Nepali settlement as buffer in the area. In the case of northeast India British power wanted to change the tribal demographic pattern in various location as part of their colonial policy. With this interest British encouraged retired Gurkhas to settle in the various parts of northeast. British acquired their political control over Assam in 1826 and started to develop the area to secure their position and opened up various settlements for consolidating their colonial empire. Various avenues were opened for the exploitation of resource and for the generation of cash revenue. Sanatorium, railway network, government and private bungalows, military recruiting station etc were established. With the infrastructural development the British founded various enterprises like tea plantation, cinchona plantation, mining industry, etc. For the growth of those enterprises strong labour forces were needed. Scarcity of labour was acute in eastern and northeastern areas. British entrepreneurs to fulfill their needs for labour force started to recruit hardworking impoverished Nepalis in the emerging sectors. With the passing of time Nepali graziers, manual labourers in coal mine, tea plantation and forest, agricultural groups and other professional groups of Nepalis started to migrate into eastern and northeastern India. The British encouraged Nepali migration to populate the barren land, to bring the wasteland under cultivation and to earn money through taxation. The British local authorities also supported Nepali settlement in their locality. To fulfill the demand of milk and milk products, to get coolies, workers for governmental works, the British local authorities arranged for the settlement of immigrant Nepalis in their local areas. Besides allotting land to retired Gurkha personnel

many other Nepali immigrants were given land in lease or in other forms. Thus colonial setting in the nineteenth century pulled the Nepalis into Eastern and Northeastern India.

The British colonial power for their colonial interest released the common people of Nepal from the oppression of the landlords and aristocracy but trapped them in a new kind of exploitation. It is colonial exploitation. Landlessness of the majority of common people, heavy taxation, oppression of money lenders and local officials, slavery, social exclusion of the non favoured castes and other factors devastated the commoners of Nepal. Growth of population from the middle of the eighteenth century created pressure on the limited resources of the country. Oppression of aristocracy, rulers, even the Rana families made the situation more difficult for the common Nepalis. British colonial power after the Anglo-Nepal war signed the Treaty of Sugauli and paved the way of commoners' migration in India. The trend of Nepali migration was seen from the political unification of Nepal. Nepal government before the Rana rule tried to check the Nepali emigration to India but failed. Poor economic condition, slow industrial growth, trade deficit, unemployment of Nepalis made the situation conducive for the British. The British took the advantage and used those common Nepalis in the interest of colonial expansion, colonial economy and dragged them into a new trap. Nepalis migrated from their home and settled in various corners of India, Bhutan, Myanmar and other places. A huge chunk of migrant Nepali concentrated in Eastern and Northeast parts of India.

In postcolonial times Nepali migration to the area was continued but the state policy was changed. Newly independent country of India wanted to maintain good relation with Nepal. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between the two countries in 1950. No border restriction was imposed, easy and free movement across the border was granted the citizens of Nepal and India. Even performing of personal economic activities, acquiring of moveable and immovable assets was permitted for Nepali migrants to India, though, permanent citizenship was not granted. However the migrants became naturalized citizens after long periods of stay or those who were born in India. Postcolonial state thus facilitated Nepali migration to India which is a legacy of the past. State directly did not sponsor Nepali migration but created conditions which facilitated Nepali migration. Socio-political conditions of Bhutan and Burma also pushed the Nepalis from those foreign countries to eastern and northeastern India. India did not take

strong measure to stop such forced migration of Nepalis from Bhutan and Burma. Nepali migration at the time of Maoist movement in Nepal, or illegal trafficking in postcolonial period was not addressed efficiently by the states.

Huge number of Nepalis started to migrate to the area primarily on temporary basis but gradually permanent migration took place and settlements were established. A good volume of migration of Nepalis and their settlements were established in Darjeeling, Duars of West Bengal, neighboring state Bhutan Sikkim, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and other northeastern states. It was seen that mainly hill ethnic groups from Nepal migrated to India initially but gradually high-caste Nepalis started to migrate. Earlier Nepalis usually settled in those places of India where climatic conditions were more or less similar to their home places in Nepal. But in later days, they settled in the hottest places of India because of economic needs.¹

Nepali migration to eastern and northeastern India is still continuing. In colonial period, census of 1931 showed 16.49 percent increase in Nepali migration in the country from the previous census figure. Out of this 18.46 percent migrated to Darjeeling district. In postcolonial period after the peace treaty huge Nepali migration occurred in India. In the year of 1961 an increase of nearly 79 percent Nepali migration from the previous census figure was seen. Among the migrants only 6.58 percent migrated to Darjeeling district. Nepali migration in Darjeeling district in the year of 1971 went down to 4.7 percent and nearly to 1 percent in 2001. But in 2001, a significant rate of migration was witnessed in India. An increase of nearly 25 percent was recorded from the previous census year. So it can be argued that in colonial period Nepali migrants preferred Darjeeling as their destination but in postcolonial period they preferred other places of India as well. Nepali migration to specific areas of Northeast India also decreased significantly in postcolonial period. Ethnic movement and violence against the Nepalis was the main cause of such decrease. Population pressure, scarcity of resources, lack of job opportunity in the host district also discouraged such Nepali migration.

¹ Subba, T.B., *Nepal and the Indian Nepalis in 'State of Nepal'* by Kanak Mani Dixit and Shastri Rama Chandaram (eds), Himal Books, Kathmandu, 2007, p. 126.

Nepali migrant in India, specifically in Eastern and Northeast India have contributed a lot to the growth of overall economy of the place. Nepalis who settled in the Northeast through generations tried to mix up with the local tribes and to assimilate in local communities with socially, culturally, linguistically and through matrimonial relations to make India their home. However, they did not forget their own cultural traits and traditions. There is a theory that in Northeast India Nepalis are losing their socio-cultural identity. Living with tribal people they are adopting their culture, custom, habits, dress code and other values so rigorously that they are losing their own cultural entity. Many Nepalis are marrying tribals, adopting Christianity and Buddhism. This change, it is argued, has not always been voluntary but under compulsion. Nowadays many Nepalis are getting married to tribal women for their safe living in the place. Many Nepalis living in Northeast have slowly forgotten their own Nepali language and usually mix tribal dialects when speak Nepali. Most Nepalis who are graziers and agriculturist and work as labourers fall in this category. But the Nepali ex-soldiers of Assam Rifles and Gorkha Regiments could speak Nepali language fluently. The proverb '*if you want to spoil an ethnic community then first you make them language-less entity...*' is applicable in case of Nepalis living in Northeast India.²

Nepali migrants came to India as dairy farmer, army men or as manual labourer but after taking modern education in the host society their children have acquired social status and prestige and do not like to do jobs their parents or grandparents did. Today some of them are Panchayat members at the village level, some are teachers, clerk in the office, businessmen, Professor, Doctor or in many other professions. Children of the present generation are getting education and training in good institutions. New generation people are now coming to big cities of India with better jobs from the interior places of Northeast and Eastern India and even moving overseas as skilled manpower. Self-development among the Nepalis has become the cause of jealousy of certain section of tribal population of interior places. On the other hand, with the increase of population and pressure of competition for resource sharing has assumed violent nature. Scholars like Baral in 1992 writes, demographic change in the place creates crises in the resources sharing and sub national identity consciousness across India. Present day situation of the place discourages Nepalis to migrate into various popular destinations of Northeastern India.

² Sharma, Khemraj, 2012, *The Nepalis of North Eastern Frontier of India*, Abhijeet Publications, New Delhi, p. 132.

Violent outrages are very common against of Nepalis mainly in Northeast India. Different Indian states contravening the treaty of peace and friendship imposing 'Restricted Area Permit' (RAP) to have control over Nepali immigration in those specific areas. This system of RAP has also been imposed in the areas where ethnic conflicts have developed. Nepalis have also been restricted for the protection of the indigenous population. Making a clear differentiation between the real Nepali migrants and the Indian Nepalis is a very difficult task. So long as the open border between the countries will remain distinction cannot be made between Nepalis from Nepal and Nepalis from India. So the pressure from the state and the society on even Indian Nepalis is high at present. Nepalis who are living from a long time in Northeast India are thought to be foreigners by a section of tribal people. The tag 'foreigner' has been attached to them and in a new political situation these people are being evicted from the land where they settled long ago with colonial support. Regional ethnic clashes in Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and other places have forced the Nepalis who were born in India to go to other places, even to Nepal. In some cases, they are homeless, stateless and identity-less and very often they enter Nepal as squatters.³ Indian Nepalis are not allowed to get '*Nagarikta Praman Patra*' or Nepal citizenship certificate. For them the state of Nepal is even worse than India. Deprivation exists in various forms in Nepal, like material poverty, political marginalization, socio-cultural oppression etc. Nepalis living in India are in dilemma today. In Nepal they are recognized as '*Prabasis*' and in India as '*Bideshi*'. To express the grievance many Nepalis in Northeast India remarks that in the colonial period Nepalis entered the Northeast, had to pay only taxes to the British government. But in postcolonial time they are being compelled to pay money to the tribal landowners as tenant, to State Government and also to tribal societies and terrorist outfits. One Gorkha retired personnel has remarked "*Today we find ourselves in a situation which is perhaps worse than what prevailed during British times. The British termed us as 'domiciled Gorkhas' and yet never discriminated us against other Indians in respect of socio-political and economic privileges, but today our basic rights are trampled*"⁴ Nowadays Nepalis living in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram think that West Bengal, Assam and metro cities are safer for their survival. Homeless situation of the Nepalis in Northeastern states due to terrorist threat,

³ Adhikari, Jagannath & Gurung Ganesh, 2009, *Migration, Security and Livelihoods: A case of Migration between Nepal & India*, Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Nepal, p. 23.

⁴ Shangpliang, A.M., 1997, Recruitment Policy of the British and its Impact in the North East: A Case Study of the Gorkhas, *NEIHA Proceedings*, 18th Session, Shillong, p. 184.

citizenship issues compel them to go to Assam and West Bengal. Presently many of them are migrating to Siliguri and adjacent areas and also to *Duars* of Jalpaiguri.

Nepali migration into India is a great concern both for the government of India and Nepal in the present days. Transborder migration between the countries and the issue of illegal import and export of foreign goods across the border, involvement of migrant communities in other illegal activities and trafficking are very alarming today. Open border and the treaty of Peace of Friendship of 1950 between the two countries are blamed for migration, illegal activities, trafficking and smuggling. So social scientists argue for the revision of the treaty. The two Governments are taking steps to regulate migration in both the countries. Newspaper report published in *Uttar Banga Sangbad*, in 20th March 2013, stated that Nepal government has argued against recruitment of Nepali nationals for Indian Gurkha Military force. There are 13th, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th Gurkha regiments in India. More than 25 thousand Nepalis are working there, among them 70 percent are from Nepal and remaining are Nepalis domiciled in Darjeeling, Deradun, Dharmasala and other places. Besides, near about 20 thousand Nepali Nationals are working in semi-military forces. Nepal government does not encourage migration of Nepali Nationals to India. Nepal government in some cases are taking measure to rehabilitate illegal migrants on their own accords and encouraging Nepali migrants living in India and Burma to return to Nepal and providing them land for settlement in Terai of Nepal. Even government has made an arrangement for British ex-soldiers, Indian ex-soldiers to be settle in the Terai and around the border area of the country because of internal politics.⁵ Nowadays potential migrant from Nepal do not prefer India as suitable destination. Northeast India is no more attractive for the migrants. Various urban areas of India and overseas countries gained in attraction for white collar jobs.

In nineteenth century natural migration and expansion of Gorkhas of Nepal were stopped by British colonial power through confining them to the area which affected their livelihood. British created conditions where Nepalis could be used as labourers, soldiers. Nepalis were utilized and exploited by the British in India. Yet they found it attractive to migrate to India for the condition they felt deplorable back home. The British utilized the Gorkha soldiers even in the European theatres during the two World Wars. The Gurkha ex-soldiers and other Nepali

⁵ Adhikari, Jagannath & Gurung Ganesh, 2009, Nepal, p. 20.

migrants found themselves better economically in the Eastern and Northeastern India, and many of them prospered in course of time.

The migration of Nepalis continued after the independence of India. The British treated the Nepalis as foreigners and Foreigners tax was levied on them. In post-colonial India also the foreigners tag virtually remains even with those Nepalis who are born and brought up in the Northeast and Eastern India. It is an irony of history.