

Migration, Refugee and Conflict

Week 3– History of Migration in Nepal

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Understanding terminologies

- Emigrant actually focuses on the perspective of the country of departure. A person who moves from his or her country of nationality or the usual residence to another country. The reason for movement is the country of destination becoming his or her new country of usual residence. This above definition was adapted from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. ,”long- term migrants”, Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration (1998).
- Emigration: It is from the perspective of the country of departure. It is viewed as the act of moving from one’s country of nationality or usual residence to another country of destination, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.

- Immigration: It is from the perspective of the country of arrival. The act of moving into others country, so that destination becomes new country of usual residence.
- Immigrant: Viewed from the lens of country of arrival. A person who moves into a country other than that of his or her nationality so the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.

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- Economic migrants: This is referred to any person who is seeks for economic opportunity within the state or proceeds for migration internationally. In addition, this term should be used very cautiously to the specific categories of migrants those who do not fall under the migrant workers definition defined by International Convention on the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMRW).
- Migrant workers: As defined by above convention migrant workers are those person who are engaged or has been engaged in a work in a state where he / she is not a national and they are remunerated for their engagement at work.

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- Internal migrant are those who move within the state boundary for different purposes due to diverse reason.
- Internal migration is the movement of people within the state for a reason to establish new temporary or permanent residence.
- International migrants are those who is outside of the state of the citizenship he or she holds. They move permanently or temporarily and also move in both a regular or irregular situation.
- International migration simply is the movement of people from their habitual residence crossing the international borders.

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- Irregular migrant refers to migrant in an irregular situation
- Irregular migrant worker refers to undocumented migrant workers
- Irregular migration simply is the movement of people that is against the provisions of laws, regulations, international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination.
- Those who mostly use irregular channel include refugees, victims of trafficking, and unaccompanied migrant children .

- The history of migration dates back to several events.
- Reasons behind several reasons occurred
- People migrated as migration affects each area of life as such (social, economic, political, Cultural, environmental and demographic)
- Likewise Nepal also saw diverse reasons in its historical timeline.
- Coming to this contemporary era the shift in migration trend has changed however, the reasons behind it remains same.
- In addition, the migration is in all forms immigration , emigration and foreign Labour employment.

Several historical practices of migration included:

- The unification strategy adopted by the Shah rulers
- The trade purpose
- The occurrence of epidemic such as cholera & chickenpox
- Army recruitments and Nepali security forces in both the neighboring countries China and India.
- Nepalese youths being involved in Boxer rebellion, Sepoy mutiny and even in British east India as a strong supporting soldiers.
- Marriage migration to India

The similarities in practicing culture and tradition, food habits, values were major reason behind marriage migration. Still this type of exists in between Nepal and India.

- China and Nepal have always been friendly neighbors since ancient times
- Marriage migration can be traced back to ancient times.

As early as the Tang Dynasty, the Nepalese royal family married Princess Bhrikuti to the Tibetan local leader Songtsen Gampo.

Bhrikuti and Princess Wencheng of Tang Dynasty were two wives of leader who worked together and supervised over the construction of Jokhang Temple and Ramoche Temple in Tibet.

Buddha's 8-year-old and 12-year-old life-sized statues brought by them respectively are still worshiped today by tens of thousands of Buddhists around the world in the Jokhang and Ramoche temples every year.

The two princesses, according to their great achievements in bringing Buddhism to Tibet, were called as the Green Tara and White Tara respectively.

History of Migration in Nepal

- Basically, the trans-Himalayan trade between India, Nepal, Tibet and China has been traced back to 500 BCE.
- This is depicted to be the earliest form of movement to and from Nepal.
- Tibeto-Burman language speaking populations arriving from North and Indo-Aryan groups such as Brahmin and Kshatriyas from South traces the movement in Nepal.
- Nepal had closer cultural kinship with Tibet until early 19th century. This created migration trends for Nepalese in Tibet and Tibetans in Nepal.

Emigration From

- Focusing on the formal migration of Nepalese is associated with the recruitment of young Nepali males into the British Army.
- The 1815 treaty during the Anglo-Gorkha war focused on the recruitment of Nepali males to British Army.
- This treaty was between Amar Singh Thapa and General David Ochterlony in Malaun(now India).
- In 1816 to end the Anglo-Gorkha war Sugauli Treaty was signed but that specifically didn't highlight the issues of recruitment however developed a harmonious relationships between Nepal and the British East India Company

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- The migration to India along with their families forming Nepali settlements along the hill areas of north India and extending to the border of Afganistan and in east to Burma began.
- Abbotabad, Murre, Simla, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Shillong, Mandalay
- Also Nepalese migrated to Kumaun and Garhwal.
- Formalisation of recruitment of Nepalis Army took place in 1886 A.D.
- Nepali Youths fought in the WWI and WWII being on the side of British. The earliest recruitment includes being an army.
- The 1947 tripartite agreement than emphasized more on recruitment in Army.

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- This tripartite agreement was between Nepal, India and British to recruit Nepali men into Nepali army.
- Still the continuation of recruiting Nepali youths into foreign army remains. Now also Nepalese serve in Britain, India and Singapore).
- Earlier the migration pattern of Nepalese to India was also linked to the tea plantations establishment in Darjeeling and opportunities in Assam. In addition, British encouraged Nepalese to settle in Sikkim after 1888 to counter Tibetan influence.
- Furthermore, the discovery of coal and oil in the northeast also influenced migration.

- Nepalese worked in tea estates, oil refineries, coalmines and sawmills across Northeast and decided to permanently settle there.
- This continued till the rising demand of unskilled labour getting involved in road construction and infrastructure development in the region.
- The 1950 Nepal-India Treaty of Peace and Friendship formalized the free movement of people between two countries without any formalization (no passports and visas required).
- This further pushed Nepalese to migrate to India.
- The Foreign Employment Act in 1985 than created space for migration to other countries.

Few Concerns

- The 19th and 20th century saw Nepali migrant populations to other countries than India ; Bhutan,Burma,Malaysia (then Malaya), Thailand and Bangladesh (Then part of India) and Tibet.
- During the late 19th century Nepalese also emigrated to Bhutan in the southern region as farmers.
- The chaos in 20th century also affected migration.
- The Chinese takeover to Tibet in 1959 affected Nepalese in Tibet.
- The Burmese Citizenship Act 1964 was another reason that affected Nepalese in Burma.
- Nepalese in Northeast India were affected due to anti-foreigner activisms.
- The Bhutanese government announced Nepali origin in Bhutan (Lhotsampas) who could not prove their residence in Bhutan prior to 1958 would be denied citizenship.

Immigration

- The inflow of people also needs to be highlighted to understand migration in Nepal,
- During the period of Gorkha conquest the shah rulers emphasized on encouraging immigrants from north India to settle in Terai for the military benefits and accomplishing strategic affairs.
- This Indian immigration was in between paused to some extent due to the eradication of malaria in 1956, enactment of Land Reform Act 1964 and the nation- building project by Panchayat regime. This encouraged the migration of hill people in Nepal into Tarai region in Nepal.
- The Indian immigrants in Nepal is a on-going pattern of migration in Nepal.

- In addition, several situational events in India have pushed Indians to migrate to Nepal.
- The increment of Muslims by 39 percent in between 1981 -1991 was a result of communal disturbance in India.
- Similarly Sikhs also immigrated after 1984
- Developments in diverse economic sectors in Nepal attracted Indian residing in border area
- The mid-1980s Hindu extremism rise In India occurred.
- Destruction of Babri Masjid attack in Ayodhya, Uttarpradesh occurred.
- (Operation Blue star military attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar was another reason to migrate.
- Assassination of Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi that sparked anti-Sikh riots in parts of India also led to migration.

- Concluding that immigrants in Nepal are not only from India but also are from Burma, Tibet, Pakistan, Malaya, Bhutan.
- In Nepal there is the existence of the individuals or group of individuals those who have fled the persecution such as; Rohingya refugees, refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- During the Tibetan rebellion 1959, a large number of Tibetan refugees entered Nepal in 1959-60.
- Bhutanese Refugees resettlement program has tried to give a indication to durable solutions to refugee issues however, a lot of challenges remains .

- The trans-himalayan artistic tradition was flourished by Araniko in China and Tibet.
- Araniko led a team of artists to China and Tibet to make a number of pagoda style artichetural buildings.
- This was the time of Yuan dynasty

The Gurkha soldiers were also a part of Boxer rebellion in 1900. The Boxer rebellion in China was a campaign against foreigners. Gurkhas served there bravely as a part of international force sent.

Gurkhas are known as the fearless and is well known for their loyalty, professionalism and bravery.

Gurkhas involvement includes

The Anglo-Nepalese War from 1814-1816

Pindari War from 1817-1818

Anglo-Sikh War and Second Anglo-Sikh War

Indian Sepoy Rebellion

Second Afghan War

The Boxer Rebellion

Tibet Expedition

World War I and World War II

1947 Indian Independence

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- Malayan Emergency
- Borneo Confrontation
- The Falklands
- Afghanistan (2001-2014)
- Iraq (2003-2011)
- Gurkha 200 (2015)

Internal Migration

- The internal migration in Nepal consists the migration from the Hills to the Terai.
- The Malaria eradication in the Chitwan valley took place in mid- 1950s.
- The resettlement program introduced by Government increased the internal migration
- People started migrating from hill regions of Nepal to Terai regions of Nepal.
- The rural-urban migration is another pattern of internal migration in Nepal.
- People are seeking opportunities, opting for better way of living by uplifting their living standards and also are in search of access to diverse facets of development.

- Hill to Terai movement in Nepal was for agriculture benefits.
- The land scarce in Hill was one major reason behind migration.
- The productive land, plain topography and easy access to infrastructure also was reason behind migrating to Terai.
- In addition, the governments policy to provide land grants to its officers, land reclamation and settlements encouraged by the state increased the numbers of migrating population.
- The economic opportunities along with the legal framework developed by state also has a role in internal migration.

Contemporary

- The labour migration at present is more focused on foreign labour migration.
- Large number of Nepalese proceed to foreign labor migration seeking diverse opportunities.
- However, the student migration , marriage migration and all other diverse nature of migration still exists.
- The major focus is on the patterns and trends of foreign labour migration.
- The top destinations Nepal migrate to are the Gulf countries and Malaysia .
- Regarding Nepalese migrating to India for work; due to unavailability of record exact number cannot be traced. In addition, the returnee migrant workers number from India to Nepal also cannot be traced.

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- Furthermore the open border with India has created challenges regarding the trafficking and smuggling of migrants.
- The several political fluctuations and a ten year old decade civil war also shaped the pattern and trends of migration within and outside the national boundary (Foreign Employment).
- Hence, this issues also needs to considered while focusing on contemporary labour migration.
- From mid-1980s Nepalese started to migrate to the Gulf States and Malaysia for work.

- The rapid economic growth in Gulf states and the large demand of workers led Nepalese to proceed for foreign migration.
- In addition, the decline in agriculture production and economic opportunities in Nepal contributed to outmigration.
- Basically, skilled and semi-skilled began to go to Gulf states in the construction and service sectors.
- Nepal is a major labour sending country and it is a common livelihood strategy for youths from both rural and urban areas.
- In absence of well-paid and suitable jobs, Nepal is experiencing the drain of highly educated manpower in the recent years. The exact number of brain drain is not known, but their destination seems to be developed states.

Works done by labour migrants includes

- Manufacturing and constructing sectors
- Construction fixers
- Carpenters, Electricians, Masons
- Plastering and Painting workers
- Security Guards
- Technical Workers
- Domestic Workers and Caregivers
- Hotels business
- Catering businesses
- Health sectors

- The enactment of Foreign Employment Act 1985 was the main legal framework that focused on the foreign employment to newer destination countries than India.
- The mobility in order to acquire better livelihood and overcome the poverty is one major role the labor migration has played.
- However, there are several social- cost of migration that can be considered.
- In addition, the remittances sent back home by the labor migrants have played a crucial role in combating individual and families poverty level.
- While also contributing in Nepal's GDP.

Why Labour migration in Nepal increased drastically is a major question of concern.

- This can be viewed in the drastic increment adopting liberalization of migration policies.
- In addition, the necessity and shortage of labour and demanding their presence in countries such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arab and United Arab Emirates. So basically Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
- The Emigration of Nepal due to violence occurrences. The decade-long armed conflict from 1996-2006.
- The most popular destinations for Nepali labour migration are above mentioned six destination countries of GCC and Malaysia.
- As per data 85 % of population with labour approvals are working in these countries

Trends of Labor migration

- The National Living Standard Survey 2011 came up with a conclusion that 56% of Nepali households have at least one member of their family working and living abroad.
- The remittances sent by these members have supported them to overcome poverty and uplift the living standards.
 - In 2020 the remittances sent by migrant workers was 23.5% of Nepal's GDP.
- The COVID-19 pandemic decreased the amount of remittances.
- In 2021 the remittances inflow was 23.8 %
- Nepal ranks seventh globally among the top remittance recipients relative to gross Domestic Product(GDP)

- The preliminary report of 2021 census mentioned 2.1 million Nepalese are abroad.
- This represents that 7.4 % of national population.
- Men make up 81.3 per cent of this migrant group.
- Department of Foreign Employment(DoFE) has approved 110 countries as labor migration destination countries in Nepal
- However, it is estimated that Nepalese work in as many as 172 countries worldwide.
- Despite several countries as a destination in few countries only most of the labor migrants are concentrated. These includes;
- The labor permits in Nepal is issued by DoFE.

Pandemic and labor Migration

- Already known as the vulnerable populations, the migrant workers became more vulnerable during the time of COVID-19 pandemic.
- The situation turned out to be more precarious and the necessity to focus on their health rights was prioritized.
- The pandemic created havoc and questioned on the access of justice of labors.
- In order to view their concerns several plans, policies and programme formulations took place.

The psychosocial reintegration was one main approach via utilization of their remittances.

- The pandemic led to decline in labor migration for certain time however, now in the post-pandemic phase people are proceeding for labor migration

- Since 2000s the rising trend in labor migration is witnessed.
- The DoFE has issued over 4.7 million new labour approvals since 2008/09.
- DoFE has renewed over 1.8 million labour approvals since 2011/12.
- Despite the everyday flow of Nepali workers to and from India is unrecorded the national survey 2017/2018 estimated that there are almost a million Nepali migrant workers working or seeking employment in India.
- Moreover, the data seems to be more higher in considerations to seasonal migrations to India.

Nepal Labour Migration Trends

It can be divided into three trends. This includes basically,

1. Internal migration

This includes migration from Himalayan , Hills and Terai regions within the national boundary.

2. Migration to India

3. Migration to countries other than India ; that is referred as foreign employment.

- The foreign employment is highly regulated by the institutional mechanisms, legislations and adoption of diverse diplomatic strategies.

- Whereas migration to India is an easy access as Nepal borders with India and there requires no passports and no visas.

- This above open access is related to 1950 Friendship Treaty between Nepal and India

Peace and friendship Treaty, 1950

- Nepal and India share an open border as per the agreements of a bilateral treaty signed in 1950.
- This provision clearly emphasizes on the travel and work across the border by being treated as a native citizens.
- The article 6 and article 7 of this treaty clearly indicates the reciprocal existence.
- The article 7 emphasizes on the same privileges in consideration to residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce and movement of a similar nature.

- The concern here lies is regarding the fair and ethical recruitment practices.

In consideration, to this government of Nepal has initiated and also implemented several policy provisions.

Few things it has highlighted includes as follows:

- free-visa, free-ticket policy provisions

-Health and safety of migrant workers

-Migrant workers access to justice In Nepal

-Remittance inflow into the country

-Reintegration of returnee migrant workers

-Skills profile of migrant workers and skills testing and certifications

-Labour migration from Nepal to India

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