Chapter-v

Conclusion

Migration is the process of changing the usual place of residence. This is a phenomenon as old as the history of mankind. People move from one place to another in search of means of subsistence and for betterment of life. One of the most significant aspects of recent demographic changes in Pokhara valley is the rapid growth of population and urbanization due to the unprecedented rural to urban migration. Historically, it has seen hill-to-hill eastward trend of migration in Nepal. After 1960s, the migration has changed its course as from the mountain and hill to Terai in the form of frontier migration. Similarly, after 1990s, the migration has changed its course again in the form of rural to urban and rural/urban to other countries spatially gulf, middle east, south east and far east by crossing the international border.

Today migration has emerged as a major issue of concern for population and development in Nepal. Most studies have generally failed to provide more than proximate explanations of why migration occurs. This study is an attempt to analyze and provide a political economy perspective on the ongoing processes, causes and consequences of migration in Pokhara valley of western Nepal. In this endeavour, the general framework advanced here views migration as a structural process, which is systematically produced and reproduced.

The findings of this study clearly indicate that people who work in the service sectors are more than three times likely to migrate than people who work in agriculture. Similarly, the odds ratio of migration is more than two times higher among men who have business than men who work in agriculture sector. The odds of migrating are likely to be less among male than female in this study area. The reason for this is marriage of the female and as a consequence migration to their husband's place of residence in a patriarchal
society like Nepal. Another independent variable, agricultural land is not so important in this study. Age is important for migration. The odds of migration are more than 79 times higher between the ages 15 to 59 years when compared to the ages less than 15 years and above 60 years. In other words, the odd ratio shows that migration in Pokhara valley is age-selective and largely in the productive age group.

The education level of graduation and above shows a statistically significant relationship with migration. The odd of migration is more than 73 times among men who have graduation and above education compared with illiterate men. Similarly, income is the strong predictor of migration. Higher the income level of families, greater is their propensity to migrate. The likelihood of migration among those people is likely to be higher who have monthly income more than Rs 12000. Among communities, Gurung, Magar, Chhetris and Bishowkarma are more likely to migrate than Brahmins. The odd ratio shows that Gurung and Magar are more than five and three times respectively likely to migrate as compared to Brahmins in Pokhara valley.

Rural-urban migration is the most dominant stream of migration in this study area. Temporary migration and commuting are now a routine part of livelihood strategies of the rural poor across a wide range. The volume of in and out-migration is on the increase throughout the study area. This is the result of demographic trends, a high degree of economic heterogeneity and political instability.

The process of migration and urbanization has increased rapidly with the development of road linkages. Constructions of Seti-hydropower project and irrigation canal have exhibited a positive influence on migration. Main reasons for migration identified from fieldwork are medical treatment, employment, and education either for self or for the children and willingness to settle in towns with urban facilities. Push as well as pull factors both seem to be responsible for migration. Recently, the push factor is becoming increasingly powerful especially at the peripheral rural areas due to vicious rural poverty. But overseas migration is mainly for employment and higher income.
There are some positive consequences of rural-urban migration at the place of origin. The income and standard of living of migrating families are increasing due to the remittances being sent back home. If the income is invested in productive sectors, it tends to generate further income. Some of the return-migrants facilitate technological change, which helps in increasing agricultural productivity of the hinterlands. On the other hand, there are some negative consequences of rural-urban migration at the place of origin. These are one of them is the brain drain, costing the loss of young, energetic, and educated workers. Then there is increased work-burden upon the de facto female heads of household, specifically in poorer peasant or landless families. The negative consequences of rural-urban migration in the destination areas are the problems of street children, child labour, prostitution, displacement of Gaine and Kumal tribals and increase of slum dwellers and acceleration of the unplanned and unmanaged urbanization.

Without politico-economic and social transformation of the state, all prevailing problems including migration may persist accelerating the social unrest and economic stagnation within the country as a whole. If economic, social, and political conditions are not improved rapidly, such unrest will become more pervasive and better-organized force that may unfortunately accelerate the process of out-migration and continue the political insurgency from the western rural hills.

The main cause of migration from hills is economic one, which is disintegrating local economies completely. The semi-colonial experience of Nepal is unique in some ways; the findings of this study provide a good example of the vicious circular linkages between underdevelopment and migration. Mainly, the continuation of Rana regime's land, labour, industrial policy, and the policy of recruiting Gurkhas in British-Indian army have had deep impact on continuous hill underdevelopment and out migration.

The assumptions of economic behavioral theory explain wage, income and economic opportunity differential. Maximization of expectations is the prime factor of migration and rational decision to move towards destination. The findings of this study contradict
these assumptions. Migration tends to increase in Pokhara valley because of survival strategy rather than economic benefit from the rural poverty-stricken areas. However, the case of out-migration is rather different and motivated by economic benefit and betterment of life through this process. Similarly, the assumptions of demographic transition theory explain the population pressure and carrying capacity of land and natural resources. In other words, population pressure leads to out-migration. From the findings of the study, this theory partially holds the water on the bowl. In contrast, people have migrated to the densely populated Indian cities from the less populated valley and its periphery.

Spatial distance theory assumes that distance and utility/disutility factors play major roles on migration decisions but the findings of this study prove other way round. Although, the anthropology and sociology theory emphasize the family tie, kinship, and ethnic network as the determinant factor of it, this study has totally refuted these assumptions. None of the above existing theories is fully applicable here but they contribute partially. This study has also found the existing theory of selectivity is important. People between 15 to 39 years old are more likely to migrate.

Internal migration in Pokhara Valley towns and adjoining rural settlements is a function of political instabilities in the hilly areas. Although, statistically this hypothesis is significant but this study proved that this is not the sole cause, i.e. political insurgency in the western hill region. The second hypothesis that is the rural-urban interactions have increased with the growth of economic opportunities in both agriculture and non-agricultural sector is correct. Industrialization and modernization of the agricultural sector after irrigation increased employment prospects. The third hypothesis, i.e., the development of transportation and communication linkages with the other parts of the country, has increased the mobility of the people to the urban areas is definitely significant but it is not the only cause of migration because there are reasons such as tourism, trekking, family ties and economic means of survival. Migration in Pokhara
Valley has occurred especially from peripheral highlands, simultaneously with the construction of Seti irrigation canal. This hypothesis is also partially true because it has increased production, and employment opportunities, along with the rate of inflation.

The last hypothesis, that the inward flow of migration in Pokhara Valley, has resulted in the creation of slum settlements, it is approximately correct. Almost 20% of the migrants go to the slums due to un-affordability of proper housing and unemployment. Thus, causes and consequences of migration in underdeveloped societies are slightly different from the developed societies. The redistribution of population through the process of migration is uneven in Pokhara valley in terms of caste, clan, and economic class.

Labor migrants are an integral part of production relations; but in terms of their class, position and production roles, they are generally fixed. If any population remains economically viable, it has to participate in the process of material production in some way. The viability of public economy depends on the ability to exercise the means of production in their possession at destination. Economic viability of different classes varies in accordance with class roles and positions, along with the availability of economic opportunities within Pokhara valley and elsewhere. Specially, class bias in them is translated into a given “choice strategy,” in which individuals’ socio-economic decisions reflect the choices or constraints available to them in terms of their class positions and roles. While there are several unconstrained choices available to dominant class members, the subordinate class has three main options to improve their economic lot in Pokhara valley and its peripheral highlands. These options are: (1) adaptive choice, (2) revolutionary choice, or (3) migratory choice. The migratory choice could take different forms, for example, short-term seasonal, long-term circular, or permanent in and out migration. Though the underlying motive of all choices may seem to be essentially economic, the difference clearly manifests class distinctions in terms of migrants, respective economic positions, abilities, and options.
Adaptive choice is the least risky one, although it rarely improves one's socio-economic lot. The revolutionary choice is perhaps the most difficult and risky of all because it is a long, enduring process, requiring a great deal of collective action, organization, resources, and class consciousness, however some enthusiastic youth participated in insurgency as the rebel from the western hills. At present, in Pokhara valley and the peripheral hinterlands, due to the third choice people adopt migration as a viable economic strategy, mainly because it, unlike docile adaptation, offers a way out of the existing structural trap and new possibilities to improve their economic condition, but is not as highly risky, costly, and uncertain as the revolutionary option. The process of migration should be analyzed and explained, concerning the socio-spatial structure, the historical conditions under which it came to exist, and the political and socio-economic conditions under which it is perpetuated in the valley.

In contrast, dominant class may view migration as a sound economic strategy and decide to move to a new area at least for two reasons. Firstly, migration serves as vehicles for them to expand the geographical sphere of their power base and economic horizon. Therefore, they dispatch certain family members to areas where new lands or opportunities are available, thus leading to a frontier migration. Secondly, it is a mechanism, to minimize potential risks associated with an expanding family size in an economic environment where even dominant class families may find local opportunities too limited for their further advancement.

With regard to urban-ward migration, technological changes and production shifts in non-agricultural sectors have important ramifications especially in Pokhara valley where farming remains in the traditional mode despite a drive towards technological changes and potential growth. In the last two decades, because of the various policies of the government, the rural agricultural sector has not indeed been undergoing much transformation, and structural changes, which have significant impact on agrarian social relations of production and consequently migration.
Regardless of its socio-economic impacts on Nepalese agrarian economy, migration from the hills has emerged as the major spatial activity for the survival of many migrant households, keeping the local economy intact. The root causes of migration remain economic and interpretable primarily in conjunction with migrant’s class positions because the same socio-structural process can produce several different forms of objective conditions, depending on the geographical features, historical development, demographic structures, and specific arrangements of the economy, in which migration occurs and continues.

The migration in Pokhara valley and its peripheral highland is beneficial for both sending and receiving regions. Place of origin is benefited by remittance and destination gained manpower and growing infrastructural development. However, migration should be systematized for the betterment of urban life and urbanization in the valley.