Chapter 6

Conclusion
Migration is a natural phenomenon of human history of settlement. Migrants are usually compelled to move from one place to another owing to various pull and push factors. People generally migrate in search for better economic opportunities, or for socio-political and ecological security and the latter dominates in case of international migration. At present migration became easier especially with the advent of liberalisation, privatization and globalisation as well as with the improvement of transportation and communication facilities. The existing demographic and economic imbalances between the developed and developing countries of the world also contribute for large scale human migration, as the population in the developed countries increase annually at only 0.3 percent which is six times lower than the population growth in developing countries. It is recorded that 192 to 200 million people migrate across places accounting for 3 percent of the world’s total population, and out of them 48 percent are women. The growth rate of current annual international migration stands at 2.9 percent.

People migrate for different reasons and it varies in different contexts and situations. Migration usually occurs due to invasion, conquest, displacement, armed conflict, environmental hazard or disaster, etc. The factors that determine the dimension and nature of migration are mainly distance, cost of travelling, mode of transportation, terrain, cultural barriers, etc. People are pushed by some factors such as the food shortage, war, flood and erosion, communal conflict, socio-political instability, environmental hazards and disasters, etc. On the other hand, the pull factors that attract the migrants are mainly the better economic opportunities, better standard of livelihood, extensive fertile land, etc. The types of push and pull factors may influence people in their movements, sometimes internally within a region, externally, voluntarily or involuntarily, and legally or illegally. However, the illegal migration may result in trafficking of human population.

Migration either leads to development or to conflict in the receiving country. The impact of migrants may be positive if their contributions lead to positive development in a region. The economic and human development of countries like Australia and the United States owe their creation as nation-states to migrants. There are five major South Asian labour-sending countries who received remittances of $40000 million in 2007. Among them, India records the highest - $27000 million, followed by Bangladesh - $6400 million.
Pakistan - $6100 billion, Sri Lanka - $2700 billion, and Nepal - $1600 billion. However, migration does not always contribute for development in the host countries. Migration can lead to conflict in various ways in the host country:

- If migrants are few in numbers they cannot trigger conflict in receiving areas as they will be too weak to make demands or destabilize the host nation. Large population influx may trigger conflict by destabilizing and overwhelming the administrative apparatus of the host making it centre of endemic tension.

- Large scale migration can create demographic imbalances and resource scarcity, food insecurity in the host economy by intensifying competition between natives and migrants for control over resources. If the migrants occupy more lands, sometimes forcibly or even mutually, it may ultimately generate land conflicts.

- When the migrants and indigenous people belong to different ethnic groups, there are high chances of ethnic conflict. The arrival of migrants may upset the stable ethnic balance and the natives may consider them as a threat and risk to their existence and identity.

- The conditions of underdevelopment and income disparity may raise the risk of conflict. If the host country is developed it can easily absorb the migrants in various sectors. But if the host country is underdeveloped or developing and the problems of poverty and unemployment persist, it is more prone to native-migrant conflict.

It is observed that people generally do not migrate unless they see the disparities in income in the origin and the host countries. India being a large and growing economy attracts migrants from the neighbouring countries who are comparatively poor and underdeveloped. They come in the hope of better economic and job opportunities and if they get these, they are unlikely to return back. Based on the comparative study of Bangladeshi and Nepali migrations into the state of Assam in India, the major findings can be extracted as follows:

- The state Assam, owing to its geographical location, abundant resources, extensive fertile lands in the river valleys, and emergence of employment
opportunities in the plantations, etc. has been attracting migrants from the neighbouring countries. The migration of people from East Bengal (present Bangladesh) and the Nepal into Assam has been occurring since ancient times as movement of population was free. The migrants of East Bengal origin were encouraged by the British to enhance colonial income and revenue. People were hired as cheap labour. The Nepalis were hired and encouraged to get recruited in the Gorkha Army and engaged in agricultural cultivation and dairy farming. The Nepali herdsmen were provided grazing lands. The retired Gorkha soldiers were too granted lands to settle down permanently for security reasons.

- Apart from the historical ties, migration from both the countries occurred due to other reasons also. Bangladesh and Nepal are facing a serious problem of population growth; both the countries recorded almost 2 percent population growth. Bangladesh is having more than 140 million with a population density of more than 1000 per square kilometre. The land-man ratio is increasing in Bangladesh which induces resource scarcities. In the case of Nepal, total population is estimated at 24.8 million during 2004 with a population density of 686 people per sq. km. Nepal characterised by rugged topography is neither favourable for extensive cultivation nor for human habitation. Nepal is one of the highest population densities in the world with respect to its cultivable land. Thus, both the countries are experiencing alarming population explosions.

- In Bangladesh, deforestation is a major cause of concern as people started encroaching forest cover for earning livelihood. The practice of Jhum cultivation in the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT), development activities as dikes, construction of highways and other infrastructure caused massive deforestation in Bangladesh. However, in Nepal, deforestation occurred mainly due to the use fuel woods. It is found that 82 percent of forest resources are used for energy and household activities in Nepal. Moreover, the practice of Jhum cultivation is also an important factor of deforestation in Nepal.

- The environmental degradation in both Bangladesh and Nepal has caused serious natural disasters such as flood and erosion, cyclone, etc. In Bangladesh and Nepal, flood is a recurring natural hazard. Bangladesh, being located in the lower part of
the three great river basins, i.e. the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna, is basically a deltaic country. The flood plains of these rivers and their tributaries covering about 80 percent of the territory of Bangladesh are prone to flood which decline agricultural production, and cause large scale population displacements. However, in Nepal, flood creates miseries to the people especially in its low land – Terai zones. In Bangladesh, Cyclone is a severe natural calamity that causes population displacements and enormous death almost every year.

- Both Bangladesh and Nepal are considered as Less Developed Countries (LDCs). Poverty is rampant in both the countries. In Bangladesh 40 percent is living below the poverty line of which 43.8 percent belongs to rural and 28.4 percent is in urban areas. The unemployment in Bangladesh continued to rise due to slow economic growth. In Nepal, for nearly 42 percent of her total population, are living below the poverty line. The problem of unemployment continued to rise due to political instability and low developmental activities in Nepal.

- Socio-political conditions in Nepal and Bangladesh have been the major factors of population migration and displacements. In Bangladesh, the minorities, especially the Hindus become the victims of communalism and state repression. The processes of Islamisation, communalism and Vested Property Act are accelerating the feeling of insecurity which ultimately leads to coerced displacement of minority population in the country. However, in case of Nepal the problem of Maoist violence and political instability, rather than communalism, prevails.

- The government policy of Bangladesh regarding the settling down of Bengali people in the CHT led to the massive uprising of insurgency that caused large scale displacement and out-migration. Meanwhile, in Nepal, it is observed that more than 13,000 lives are lost due to Maoist problem. The political stalemate and escalating conflict since 2000 had negative impact on the country’s economy, growing on average by around 2 percent over the past few years.

- India and Bangladesh share 4,096.7 kilometres of land border and the topography along the border is characterised with a mix of hilly and jungle tracks, plains, riverside, and low-lying land. The border doesn’t follow the natural barriers but goes across villages, agricultural lands, rivers, rendering the border extremely
porous to immigrants, smuggling and drug and human trafficking, insurgents and terrorists. India and Nepal shares long international border ranging at 1,850 kilometres which is open. India and Nepal are having an open border much before the Treaty of Sagauli of 1816. The Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 facilitated the free movement of population under the provision of Articles 6 & 7 which favours easy migration. Along with migration, trafficking also occurs. There are 20,000 Nepali minors and 200,000 Nepali women in brothels of India.

- Some pull factors encouraging migration from East Bengal (present Bangladesh) and Nepal into Assam are the availability of fertile agricultural land especially in the charlands and river islands, better economic opportunities in the Tea and Jute industries, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and absorbing capacity of people having different races, language cohesion, religion, etc.

- The unusual growth of Assam’s population during 1901-1951 was the second highest (137.80%) in the world exceeded only by Brazil. Assam has witnessed the fastest growth rate of population in the India during 1901-2001, with an increase of a little over eight-fold. The unexpected rise of the Muslim population in Assam can be attributed to migration from Bangladesh. Assam is the second highest Muslim-populated state in India next to Jammu & Kashmir. Based on various census figures, a steep rise of Muslim population in Assam can be observed. During 1951-61, the growth rate of Muslims in Assam was 38.35 per cent. However, the rise of Muslim population in Assam during 1971-1991 was 77.42 percent confirming apprehensions of a continuing migration of Muslims from Bangladesh.

- There has been a growing fear psychosis among the indigenous Assamese people about their identity – the fear of being outnumbered by the overwhelming migration. In the year 1951, the Assamese speaking people were reported as 56.7 percent, which increased slightly as 62.4 percent and 61 percent in 1961 and 1971 respectively. Meanwhile, the Bengalis were 16.5 percent, 18 percent, and 19.7 percent respectively during the same period. Between 1961 and 1971 the proportion of Assamese speaking population declined but the proportion of Bengali speakers increased.
• The Assamese people didn’t oppose the presence of migrants in Assam at initial stage as they were engaged as cheap labour. Tensions started mounting when the migrants made inroads to the economy by occupying lands, administration, government jobs and began to prosper. This created a sense of alarm and middle class Assamese started thinking of their socio-cultural identity.

• The rise of native-migrant conflict occurred due to the demographic changes. Most of the Northeast states have experienced high population growth after independence. Tripura has experienced 78.71 percent of population growth during 1951-1961, explained in terms of migration of Hindus from East Pakistan. In Assam, a total increase of 82 percent was observed during 1951-1971 changing the demographic pattern in 10 out of 23 districts of Assam.

• The reason for the rise of native – migrant conflict in Assam can be attributed to Assamese sub-national identity, deprived economic condition, presence of large-scale unemployment, under-developed economy. Assam would have the absorb capacity once her economy is developed and peaceful.

• The Assamese people with the help of the AASU and AAGSP spearheaded the Assam Movement. Initially, it was peaceful and secular but later turned violent. A series of protest, strike, demonstration, non-cooperation, etc. paralysed the state administration. Instead of a peaceful negotiation, the government used force to suppress the movement without studying the situation properly. The movement turned violent after 1979 and a well organised massacre took place. The violence occurred in eight districts: Nagaon, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Kamrup, Goalpara, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh and Karbi Anglong. The gruesome killings took place in Nellie, Gohpur, Goreswar, Khairabari, Silapathar, Chamaria and Dhula. According to official estimates, not less than 4,000 men, women and children were killed during the violent campaign in Assam.

• The Assam Movement displaced 327,449 migrants who took shelter in the neighbouring states of Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Tripura. The Movement adversely affected the well being of the region. It is estimated that in the case of petroleum, fertilizers etc. the loss would come to Rs. 1,272 crores. Moreover, due to the disruption of rail movement, the railways suffered a
financial loss of Rs. 32 crores. However, the total loss during this movement period is incalculable.

- The Nepali population in Assam was about 0.6 million and were not part of the conflict but passive victims. The movement leaders along with Bangladeshi migrants also targeted Nepali communities. Though no attack was reported, Nepalis were displaced due to fear of being attacked. The leaders started manipulating people to include Nepalis within the definition of foreigners. After signing the Assam Accord, the Nepalis were also included for deportation. However, for the Nepalis the cut-off date was set on 30th July 1976 and the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) was introduced for the Nepalis.

- The Assam movement has widespread consequences strengthening more identity and autonomy movement engaging other ethnic groups. The rise of insurgency in Assam is the direct consequence of Assam Movement. ULFA, a major terrorist group, emerged as a result of the movement. The demand for a separate Bodoland generated more displacements of population including Nepalis. The Assam Movement resulted in growth of a number of insurgency groups. These are NDFB, BLT, UPDS, DNSF, DHD, MULTA, KLO, UTNLF, HPC, etc. Today, in Assam almost all ethnic groups have their own army either demanding autonomy or a separate state.

- India is the largest migrant receiving country in the South Asian region. Though the problem of migration is grave in the region, the concerned countries have not yet developed any formal structure to deal with the migrants and also not developed or initiated any regional formula. These people are dealt with ad hoc administrative arrangements.

- During the colonial period, the migration policies initiated by the British were to serve the colonial administration. However, during the beginning of the 20th century, the politics of partition dominated the people's movement as political parties like the Muslim League in Assam encouraged Muslim peasants to settle down in Assam. The purpose of the Muslim League, especially of the 'grow more food' campaign led by Sadullah Government, was to create a Muslim majority area so that Assam can be included in East Pakistan.
The British perceiving the threat of anxieties developed by the Assamese people introduced the Line System in 1926 to restrict the settlement of East Bengali peasants on the plea that the identity and ethnicity of the Assamese people remains undisturbed. The Line System first introduced in Nowgong and Kamrup districts, isolated migrants from the local inhabitants and failed; it altered the demography and the Assamese people pressurised for strict implementation while the Bengalis opposed it.

Seeing the continued migration of East Bengalis into Assam, the Indian government introduced the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act on 1st March 1950 to detect and deport the East Bengalis. However, the Act was criticised as it provided safeguards to the migrants staying in Assam. The Indian Government again passed the Passport Act, 1951 and about 0.2 million passports were issued for a period of six months but even after expiry, they never returned.

The partition of the subcontinent in 1947 generated millions of forced migrants. Both India and Pakistan undertook measures to protect the minorities. As a result the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact was signed in 1950 which provided "bill of rights" for the minorities. Any minority who are the victims of communal violence in either country can come and settle down in either of the countries with full rights. Respecting the pact Indian government introduced various schemes for rehabilitating the migrants.

Around 4 million forced migrants, displaced due to partition came to India and were rehabilitated in three states: West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. Schemes for resettlement were also introduced in other states and areas like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa and Bombay.

As measures to curb migration, the Union Government introduced the Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan to Assam (PIP) in 1964. The plan was implemented vigorously by Bimala Prasad Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam. A section of the Congress Party treated the minority as their vote bank; so they refused to take any action affecting the interest of the minorities. Devakanta Baruah, one Congress Party member revealed that the party has to depend on Muslims and tea garden labourers for vote. When 27 MLAs (a large number of...
them were Muslims) of his own Congress Party protested and pressurised, Chaliha had to go slow with PIP.

- During 1964, during the wake of communal disturbances in East Bengal, a huge influx of minorities occurred into the Indian Border States. The Government of India also provided migration certificates to the intending Hindu people from East Pakistan. Around 1.11 million migrated between 1-1-1964 and 25-3-1971 and were rehabilitated in various states including the Dandakarnya project. The minority communities who migrated from East Pakistan were more or less rehabilitated respecting the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact of 1950.

- The Assam Accord paved the way for regularization of migrants, granting citizenship. In pursuance of Assam Accord, the Citizenship Act of 1955 was amended by Act No.65 of 1985 and Section 6A was inserted with the heading “Special Provisions as to Citizenship of Persons covered by the Assam Accord.” It provides that the term “detected to be a foreigner” shall mean so detected under the Foreigners Act and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 framed thereunder.

Under the said provision a person of Indian origin as defined under Section 6-A (3) who entered into Assam prior to 1st January, 1966 and has been resident in Assam since then is deemed to be a citizen of India. Most importantly, those migrants who migrated to Assam prior to 1.1.1966, including those whose names appeared on the electoral rolls used in 1967 elections shall be regularized, thereby granted Indian citizenship. Again the migrants, who came to Assam after 1.1.1966 (inclusive) and up to 24th March 1971, shall be detected in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order 1964.

- The passing of the IMDT Act in 1983 was itself a move by the government to continue the policy of vote bank for the Congress Party. The provisions of the Act were faulty and designed to serve the purpose of the migrants and were only implemented in Assam. There were 16 tribunals located all across the state with an appellate court located in Guwahati. The 16 IMDT tribunals during 1985-2005 (31st January), declared only 12,424 migrants as illegal and 1,538 migrants were deported officially. However, a judgement on the case Sarbananda Sonowal v.

- However, on February 10, 2006, the government introduced 32 tribunals by issuing a notification through Foreigners (Tribunal for Assam) Order 2006 whereby the onus to prove that a particular person was a foreigner was put back on the complainant, a procedure that figured under the IMDT Act. The IMDT Act and the migration problem became an issue of high level politics as most of the national and regional political parties were using the migrants for the purpose of election and vote banks.

Recommendations/Policy Suggestions

After analysing the major findings of the work, some suggestions can be made in order to formulate strategies to mitigate the migration problem among India, Bangladesh and Nepal. The IOM’s World Migration Report, 2003 has recommended some suggestions for managing the migration problem. Firstly, a proper research must be done to find out the push factors and subsequently development aid to facilitate sustainable development of source countries and also target international trade and investments. Secondly, the host and the source countries must legitimise migration orderly through mutual understanding and also through effective border management. Following recommendations can be suggested for the effective management of migration in India, Bangladesh and Nepal.

- An effective and strict population control policy must be introduced in all the three countries.

- The flood problem of Bangladesh is to be solved through a comprehensive study of the river basins and geological setting of the region. Bangladesh and Nepal need to strengthen their institutional and technical capabilities in a coordinated manner to forecast as well as the warning system of the flood hazards. The NGOs and the government must act in a synchronized way to handle the flood problem in both the countries. A regional approach to deal with Bangladesh flood is a must due to regional characteristics and implications of the floods.
Although Bangladesh has been capable to forecast and to give warning of the occurrence of cyclone and also in developing effective cyclone preparedness programmes and structures, thousands of lives and properties are still badly affected by this natural calamity. Bangladesh has also been successful towards providing training to a large number of volunteers to disseminate the cyclone warning and assist in the process of evacuation, rescue, first aid, and emergency relief. But the government is weak in rehabilitation and so should take more initiatives to accommodate displaced people within the country effectively and also permanently.

Agriculture is the mainstay of economy of both Bangladesh and Nepal. But there is declining trend of agricultural production observed in both the countries. There is ample scope to enhance and implement the scientific methods of cultivation to increase production level in both the countries. Bangladesh, although limited, has already started the double and triple cropping systems by using the modern agricultural inputs and implements such as High Yield Varieties, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, power tillers, sprayers, etc to boost the agricultural production. They should expand it. Nepal's agricultural productivity is also declining due to unscientific cultivation. However, Nepal has to start introducing HYV of seeds and also double-triple cropping practice to increase the agricultural productivity. Both the countries should increase the irrigation facilities such as development of deep and sallow tube wells and surface canals, etc so as make intensive use of their agricultural lands. Extension programmes and agriculture research should be further flourished to encourage farmers towards cultivating HYV cash crops and other genetically modified crops (GMC) which are adaptive to their local ecological settings.

The various Government Organisations and the NGOs are involved in poverty reduction strategies for the poor. The introduction of the micro-credit system in Bangladesh by various NGOs is also helping poor recover from the poverty. In Nepal, the government targeted the most backward people to free from poverty by introducing as many as 450 programmes/projects. Both the countries should improve their economic situations for alleviation of poverty.
• The problems of unemployment and underemployment in both the countries are rampant. Although both the governments have taken a number of steps to reduce unemployment problem, these are not enough. Investments for the creation of new employment opportunities in Bangladesh are not sufficient. Both the Governments should emphasise on the large scale investments to accelerate economic activities for job opportunities. The new enterprises with labour intensive character should be identified and encouraged. The institutions for different vocational courses and training had to be developed in the nations. In Nepal, the government should pay more attention in investing in the tourism sector.

• The Bangladesh Government must make legislation by implementing the secular ethos to remove the VPA and to ensure safety and security of the minorities. By abolishing the Act at the first, all returnable property and assets must be returned to their legal owners.

• Though the Maoist problem seems to be over by the fall of Monarchy in Nepal, the country could not yet achieve a constitution. There must be consensus among the political parties for a stable socio-political environment in Nepal so that developmental activities can take place.

• The Government of India must seal its entire political border and strict border vigilance along the Indo-Bangladesh border is to be taken (as that of Kashmir) for security reasons. The Indian government is taking such steps in a very flexible manner especially in case of its north-eastern part to seal the border.

• The conflict would not have occurred in Assam, if the state would have been economically sound or there were absence of poverty and unemployment. Still Assam is facing the wrath of unemployment and poverty. Both the Central and State governments should take initiatives to introduce various development schemes and set up industries to boost job opportunities.

• There must be uniform and sincere agendas of the political parties to deal with the migrants. One should not think of using migrants as vote bank as it may always be a security risk due to increased terrorist activities in the neighbouring countries.
The issuing of voter identity cards and also updating the NRC is considered to be a good approach to prevent and detect the further migrants.

- A peaceful and meaningful dialogue with all the insurgent groups, born mainly after the Assam Movement must be worked out for a peaceful social environment to boost up development.

- In India, unfortunately, there is no right policy to address the migration problem, irrespective of different Acts and Tribunals. A uniform pattern should be followed to detect and deport migrants, and that can be done through the Foreigners Act of 1946.

- A political consensus and will between India and Bangladesh is important to work out policies at the regional level. The economic integration of the South Asian region through the platform of SAARC is necessary which should allow free movement of population, trade, investment and business. Apart from that a mutually acceptable system of work permit between India and Bangladesh must be worked out to manage migration, simultaneously working out the political and security aspects of migration.

- It is now realised that if India Government diplomatically invests in the migrants source countries like Bangladesh and Nepal for their economic development (by analysing loss-profits etc.), the migration would have been lesser. The India Government should opt for developing India first and then gradually develop neighbours which would obviously help manage migration.

- India should also work out policies to make her neighbour stable, peaceful and economically sound. Managing migration has to be in the realm of economics and market. Informal trade and smuggling amounting to $2000 million is annually happening between India and Bangladesh. If a formal policies are worked out both the governments will be benefited.