

Life Strategies of Rural Village Inhabitants in Nepal (2)

Migration Trend under Globalization and its Social Effects in Rural Areas in Nepal

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Abstract

During developing process after 1980's, migration trend toward foreign countries has been common in rural areas in Nepal, mainly by youth males. The family members of these emigrants tend to seek their position of strategic life not only in their own villages but also in such social relations as those rural vs. urban or domestic vs. global system. On the other hand people still living in rural villages are under rather severe conditions for building up their future.

For community development in rural areas, social programs to adjust imbalance among social classes expanded during the last decade or to rebuild rural community are required. As for regional planning, each role of foreign countries, the capital city, local city, rural village, and social group of the Nepalese nationals, should be respectively planned, throughout material development, social and socio-economic programs.

Data Source

- 1) Field survey in two rural villages of the same District in the Highland Area of Nepal. The research in village T was done at first in 1992-1993, investigating whole households in the village, by the author and research cooperative Mr. Dilli Raj Gautam, assistant professor of the local campus of Tribhuvan University. The following research of sample surveys by the author was also made in 1996, interviewing was 35 cases.

- 2) The research in village D was continuously done by the author in 1993, 1996 and 2000. The main aim of investigation was migration and economic activities by village inhabitants. Interviews were done in the same sample settlement, and the number of household was 46 in 2000.
- 3) Interview research with laborers from Nepal, illegally working in Tokyo area, started in 1992 by the author also provides some qualitative information about emigration trends from Nepal, especially change of migrants. However, total sample number is only 61 and statistical method of sampling is not introduced (See Table 1.). Detailed results of the research is following.

Table 1. Number of Informants by Research Year
(Interview with overstaying Nepalese laborers by the author)

Year	1992	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	2000	01	Total
Number	3	4	-	3	12	15	10	-	8	6	61

1. Backgrounds

1) Situation of National Economies

Nepal is neighboring with India and China. Per capita Gross Domestic Product was only US\$ 210 in 1998¹⁾. One of the reasons is the mountainous land situation. And another reason is that Nepalese government cannot control its industrial policy of manufacturing because that industry is under the effects of trade and tax treaty with India which provides port facilities for international trade of Nepal. That means Nepal is under severe physical location for development, and the nation is not allowed to control its whole development plan, in the period of globalization. Under the situation, however, economic development has accelerated in 1990's, and during this decade GDP share of manufacturing industry has expanded from 6.8% in 1990 to 9.47 in 1999, and annual growth rate of industry from 1980-1990 was 8.7% and 1990-1998 7.3% (FNCCI (2000), p.27 • p.167).

2) Regional Structure and Development Plan

Since 1951 when development programs started in Nepal, the government has tried to build road network throughout the nation, however it was very hard especially for east-

west routes in mountainous area. Under the situation, Nepalese government established 'Development Regions' (at first four regions in The Fifth Five Year Plan in 1975, See Fig. 1 - A, and then five regions in The Sixth Five Year Plan in 1980). Whole nation was divided into four (five, after 1980) zones along with north-south direction, and every Development Region includes various geographical belts of southern basin, middle hill and northern Himalaya. Each basin area neighboring with India by open-border was

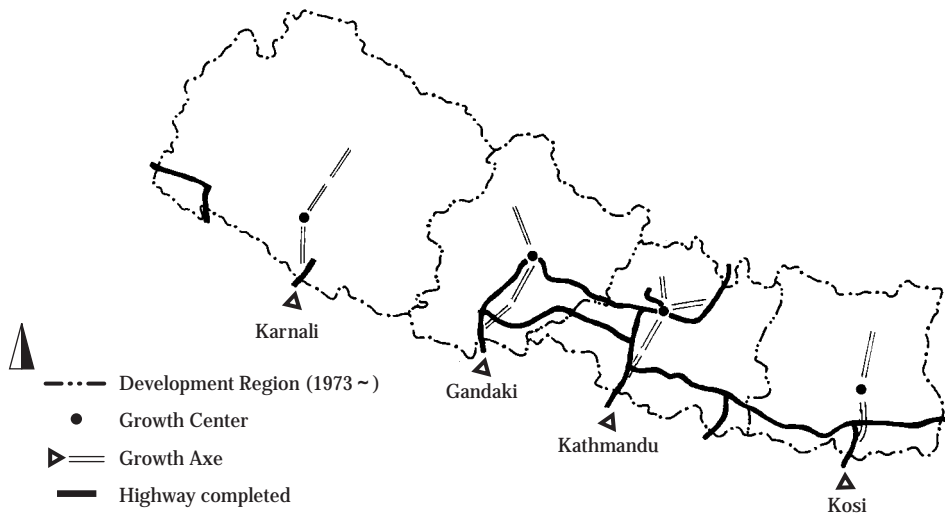


Fig.1-A. NEPAL in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1975)

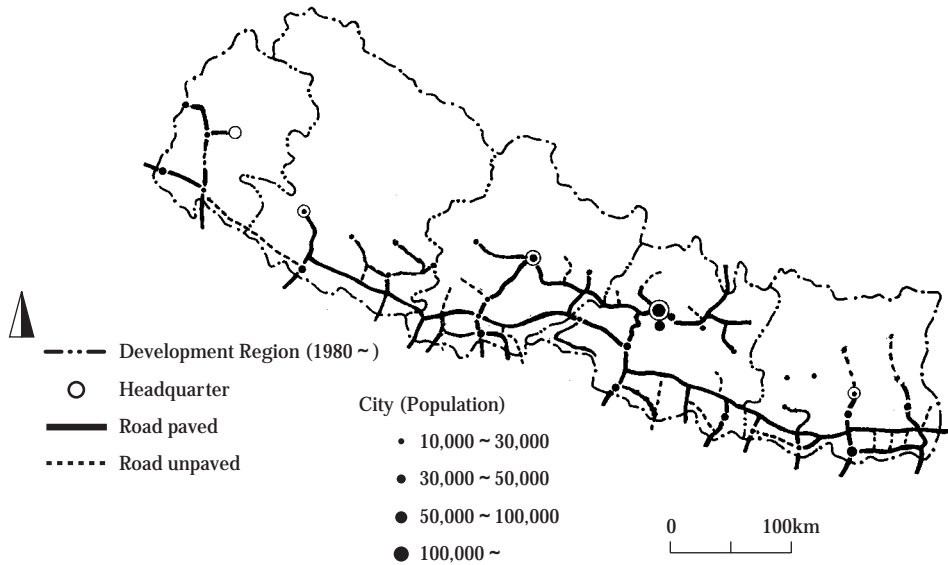


Fig.1-B. NEPAL in 1998

Fig.1 Development Plan, City and Transport Networks

expected to play the role of 'growth pole,' leading developments in less-developed hill and Himalayan region in national scale.²⁾

However, result was behind the plan's aim. Manufacturing industries agricultural have developed in the basin zone (zone called 'Tarai' in local word) since 1970's, however the effects of the development have not well spread into hill and Himalayan zones. According to census data, traditional migration from hill zone to Tarai zone for farming had been seen until 1980's when Tarai was rather empty (Gurung (1998), pp.17-38). After 1980's when industrial development started, employment in manufacturing industries in Tarai has clearly developed in relations with North India through the open-border in the field of capital, labor and market (Kobayashi (1992), pp.61-66)³⁾.

Reflecting the situation, people living in hill and Himalayan regions should rely upon economic growth of the capital city Kathmandu where foreign aid is concentrating, however, lack of transport networks have limited ripple effects of development in the capital zone. Data of Population Census indicates that dependency of employment in foreign countries is very clear in youth male group throughout Nepal except Tarai zone and the capital area since 1971.⁴⁾

2. Socio-Economic Situation in Rural Villages

1) Agriculture in Rural Villages

According to the field survey during 1992-1993 at village T, agriculture was still a main employment sector, but most of small size farming is subsistence level for self-supply even though village T has road facility linked with the capital in 5 hours. Average size of farming was only 0.6 ha per household. Method of farming was still traditional and most of products, cereals, was consumed within the village. Agricultural workers were provided from lower group of farming households, suffering lack of foods from their own farmland, while upper class families tend to send their children to secondary and higher education, expecting some position of non-agricultural employment (Kobayashi (1998), pp. 53-54).

In the decade of 1990's, that trend became more evident. As for farm size, research results of village D fieldwork after 1996 provides that the variation is growing because absent landlords are gathering farm-land especially in the frontier settlements, which developed in recent years around road or river basin.

2) Non-agricultural Sector in Rural Villages

As for non-agricultural employment within rural villages, chance is limited to teachers, local administrative service or 'small business,' that means small-size merchandise of daily foods, soap, clothes, kerosene or cigarette. In 1993, there are 85 merchandise units located in village T, though total number of household was only 895. According to the interviews, 42% merchandise sales less than Rs.150⁵⁾ per day, and 57% said getting loss in the business in 1993. Situation was similar in village D also. Throughout Nepal, unprofitable 'small business' is very common, and even though in very remote settlement out of main trails, some farmers are waiting few customers, listening to popular music by radio, every day. Why do they open such killing time business?

Well, economically thinking, I couldn't earn enough money by this store. However, people of neighbor sometimes buy any commodity, so I think it is all right. I think consumption may increase in the future if this village will develop, and then I will be rich!

(Male, age 38, farm 0.6 ha, village T, 1996)

Rental fee of this small store is a severe problem. If it were my own building that is OK. If close this store, how is my life? I don't like farming nor housekeeping. Of course I engage duty of farming in the settlement⁶⁾, or if any chance earn wage by farm-work. But I like business than farming.

(Female, age 32, farm 0.8 ha, village T, 1996)

Location of store is the problem. If I could open my shop in bazar area, business will be good. These days, more people gather in bazar area from remote area. However land-price have enough increased.

(Male, age 42, farm 1.0 ha, village D, 2000)

It is clear that consumption of commodities sold in 'small business' has been increased. In addition, expenditure for education and medicine is also increasing. That means rural inhabitants nowadays want more chances to get cash income than traditional life style.

As mentioned before, employment in local area is very limited, so most of the people choose their service out of the village.

3) Emigration for Employment

According to the survey in village T in 1992 - 1993, India was the most popular destination of emigration for employment. From among the total 242 persons working outside the village, 121 persons were working in India, 10 were in foreign countries except India, while 111 persons were working within Nepal, including 38 in the capital area of Kathmandu (Kobayashi (1998), pp. 53 - 54).

After 1995, the emigration trend is expanding. As researched in village D, especially young male generation tend to go out of the village. As for destination, adding to India, traditional destination of Nepalese from hill and mountainous zone, share of Kathmandu is growing, and other foreign areas and nations like Middle East, Malaysia and South Korea draw village inhabitants as labor.

Historically speaking, emigration for employment started in late 18th century when Nepal started to send 'Gurkha Army' to India of British colony. Since then Nepalese labor became popular in north India. Beside systematic recruiting of army members to Britain and India, Nepalese emigrants toward India had been increased. Seeking chance of employments, some informants talked as follows:

The best was British Army including those in Singapore or Hong Kong, and then Army in Middle East and Malaysia. These are chances of higher level of salary, but it is difficult because competition is hard. Then Indian Army, but salary level downs lower. Army is systematically recruiting but we can also find chances to go to India, based on information or invitation from relatives or neighbors gone there long ago. Of course they will provide you with job, dwelling and any facilities including some money for life there.

(Former Indian soldier for 35 years, age 53, male, village D)

Most job sectors in India, we foreign labors are permitted to take holidays for about a month to visit families in Nepal. Most of such 'homecoming labors' gather in the festival season of 'Dasain' and 'Tihar' ^{?)}, so village people who want to send their family members to India try to visit them during the occasions of festivals. We have experienced such chats with 'home visitors' from foreign nations even in small ages, so it is rather natural for us to go abroad for employment, and we know where Nepalese labors gather or what kind of job is better in India.

(Former guard of Indian bank for 26 years, age 58, male, village D)

As for emigration for job to India, the share of the private - recruiting introduced by their own relatives or neighbors is larger.

However, after 1980's, new wave for emigration for employment started. That is emigration to Middle Eastern nations at first, then to other countries like South Korea or Malaysia. Dispatch is based on governmental treaty, and recruiting is relied on the agent systematically.

Especially after first half of 1990's, when former labors started to come back to their home villages with good information about their experiences, village inhabitants began to adopt this type of emigration for job.

National-scale statistics of emigration of Nepalese labors also indicate its increasing and significant role for national economy. According to estimation in 2000, total volume of money sent from Nepalese labors in foreign nations except India was US.\$ 420 million, while total exports of Nepal was US\$ 600 million and volume of expenditure of the nation was US\$ 1,215 million. Nepalese government planned to increase the number of emigrants for employment to foreign nations except India to 100 thousand before 2000, though the number was estimated as 87 thousand in 1998.⁹⁾

4) Social Effects of Emigration

The most serious effect of emigration trend for job abroad is imbalance between those who can send family members and those not. Even though they have insufficient educational career or preparing money, they have chance for traditional recruiting for trends to India. However as for new type of emigration to foreign nations except India, some educational and economic background is necessary because recruiting is done by private enterprises. As reported before, economically lower class families are disadvantageous in educational achievement as a result (Kobayashi (1998), pp.54 - 56).

In addition, that imbalance will expand while the process is proceeding. People earning higher level of salary in foreign nations send money to their families.

According to 61 Nepalese labors who worked in Japan, the most popular way except daily consumption (55) was 'educational cost for family members' (38), followed by 'capital for small business' (37), purchasing land (18 for housing and 14 for farming), and building a house (33). Other answers include 'repay for debt' (14),

'payment for hospital' (13), 'deposit' (22) and so on.

It is clear that those who prepare enough source for education can easily choose the way of education. Increasing money sent from foreign nations, including India, and free competition policy in various sectors including education after 1990, made 'flood of boarding schools' even in remote rural villages. Private boarding schools in Nepal prepare higher level education including computer literacy in English, with good skilled teachers, gathering expensive fees. While private schools spread rapidly, educational level of public schools became lower because of poor quality of both teachers and students. That means, after 1990's, Nepal has adopted a system of education in which those who are rich can earn better education. Furthermore, in seeking a job even in Nepal, English and computer literacy became necessary, which means a severe condition for lower class members.

Geographically, competition in education leads concentration of youth generation or the families having children into Kathmandu, where higher education and chances for job is concentrated.

Another effect caused by increasing emigration trend is very rapid inflation of land price. According to investigation of land-price and trade in a sample settlement of village D from 1993 till 2000, a total of eight cases were reported.

Among 8 cases of farm-land trade from 1993-2000, 5 cases were sold for earning capital to invest land in Kathmandu, 3 of them were gone by whole family members. 2 cases were sold for surplus farm-land and another one case was sold by a commercial bank for debt.

On the other hand, 5 buyers were landlords living in the village, 4 of them sent family members in domestic labor markets including Kathmandu, and 2 of them also sent members abroad. 2 buyers were absent landlords outside the village, and the remaining one case was relatives of the seller in the same settlement.

Effect of overcoming money from foreign nations is just as is shown in education. Briefly speaking, that is radical rising of land-price all over the nation. According to the trade data in village D, an wet farm-land unit was traded two times. In 1995 price was Rs. 250,000 per ha, but it rose up to 875,000 in 1998, only 3 years and 5 months later⁹⁾. The

rising rate is of course much higher than 26% increase of national consumer price index during the period.

Once land-price rose up, traders became limited to rather rich group-members who are not so concerned about farming management or developing agricultural system but maintaining farm-land as a 'property' or 'investment.' They often rent their land to tenants who don't own enough land to support their family. This is the system of upper and lower class structure, and both of landlords and tenants are interested in developing agricultural system or production, because land-price only increased by overcoming salary from foreign nations without reflecting its productivity.

Another land-trade data shows a new urban system in Nepal. Rising rate of land-price (for housing or business) in the central city of the District, where village D and village T belong, is extremely high, 1350 % up from 1994 till 2000. The reason is immigration trend to local centers from rural surrounding villages. The population of that District center increased from 5,400 in 1991 up to 8,800, according to estimation of city administration.

After global emigration started, rural village inhabitants got information about life in developed nations. That lead people to migrate in 'city area' where facilities of education, electricity, trade, and information of 'developed life' is distributed. That means a new type of economies, concerned with modern type of consumption, is growing in late 1990's. Until 1980's while urban-system of Nepal was 'the capital Kathmandu, and some other cities located in lower basin area neighboring India' (Fig. 1 -A), however, now new local centers are rapidly growing all over the nation in hill and some Himalayan area (Fig. 1-B).

3. Framework for Rural Development in Nepal

As mentioned on 2 - 3), 'export of labor' has been one of the main ways to earn foreign currency for Nepal. In the era of globalization, inhabitants in Nepal are also under the effect throughout the new type of emigration.

From the viewpoint of geography, various development plans are necessary for adjusting social inequality in the changing situation.

For community development, expanding imbalance between upper and lower class in

rural area, a serious problem. For social programs for engaging lower class, effective policy of developing agricultural productivity which may solve environmental problems are necessary and the most sensitive needed subject is re-building local community.

As for regional planning, unit of daily and indirect life space should be planned. Increasing 'small business' or 'flood of boarding schools' shows that consumption of rural people has also been changing. The central city for supporting local life, developing local transport and information system surely create more complete life within rural areas. And that will contribute to modify over-concentration to Kathmandu. As mentioned in 2-4), urban system of Nepal changed into next stage in the decade of 1990's, and functional and population growth of towns or cities of District center is clearly observed. Supporting the new life-space system, however, physical development of road system, electricity and facilities of information throughout the country is necessary, because even in 1998, road system still covers only half area of the nation (Fig. 1-B).

At last, national-level development plan is concerned with social policy, which related political struggle from 1997 in the nation. That means introducing social re-distribution system of results of development and globalization. Each role of both foreign countries, the capital city, local city, rural village, every social group of the Nepalese nationals, should be planned, throughout material development, social and economic programs in national-level developing plan.

Keywords:

Migration, Life Strategy, Regional Development, Community Development, Globalization

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Notes:

- 1): See FNCCI (2000), Nepal and the World - A Statistical Profile 2000.
- 2): See Kobayashi (1992), pp. 57- 60.
- 3): For example, the ratio of Non-Nepalese employment is higher by 20 or 30% in most Districts in Tarai zone, according to the Census of Manufacturing Establishment in Nepal 1981-1982. See Kobayashi (1992), pp.61 - 67.
- 4): According to the co-hort analysis of Nepal, male population from age of 5-14 decreased about 400 thousands during the interval of 10 years, which shows they go outside Nepal before the age of 24. Huge number out-going of male population is also clear in sex-ratio analysis (ratio of male population per 100 female population). According to 1991 population census, average sex ratio of Nepal was 103 - 105, however the ratio of age group 20 - 34 was only 85 - 90 that means about 15 % male population was staying abroad. See Kobayashi (1996), pp. 66 - 68.
- 5): Rs. 150 = ¥ 330 in 1993 exchange rate. Rs. 150 was average rate of one-day wage of farming without serving foods in 1993.
- 6): Traditional system of agriculture.
- 7): According to the Hindu religion most popular in Nepal, 'Dasain' and 'Tihar' are both most significant festivals to celebrate with family members. And the season of the two festival is near, interval of only two weeks.
- 8): According to the plan based on the national budget of fiscal year 2002 - 2003.
- 9): Based on exchange rate of 1995, Rs. 250,000 = ¥431,000, and Rs. 875,000 = ¥1804,100 in 1998. In this case exchange ratio of Nepalese Rupee to Japanese Yen upped. As for price, exchange rate effect by foreign currency. For example exchange rate of Nepalese Rupee to US \$ depreciated 33 % from 1995 till 2000, those who get salary in US \$ earned the variation of 33 %. That is also the reason for especially youth generation having pessimistic perspective to their own nation's economies, to go abroad for job.

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