

## Chapter II

### Plainsmen in Sikkim

#### Introduction

Since time immemorial people have been migrating from one place to another as individuals, families, and groups for various purposes like food, shelter, security, trade, pilgrimmage, and adventure. The nature, type and causes of the movement of people from one region to another have been found to be different in different places and times. The very flow of migrants has been greatly facilitated today by the improved means of communications.

Migration is not merely the physical movement of individuals and groups. It involves a lot of strains in their social, economic, cultural and other aspects of life. Hence, it is a subject of keen interest not only to the demographers but also to sociologists, anthropologists, economists and political scientists.

The reasons for migration could be many such as economic hazards, non-availability of jobs, educational opportunities, war, famine, drought,

and other such factors. But sociologists are usually more interested in the post-migration consequences rather than the situations leading to migrations. They are particularly interested in studying how the migrants manage to survive and adapt their institutions, values and beliefs under the changed situations. They firmly believe that people do not just migrate from one place to another but also from one culture to another.

Migration may be permanent, semi-permanent or seasonal. The distance covered may also vary considerably. It is also difficult to make a distinction between external and internal migration (Lee 1975:191).

Migration does bring about a change in residence but it need not involve any change of occupation. As far as the direction of migration is concerned it is more or less clear. It is usually from rural areas to the city, from areas of stable population toward centres of industrial or commercial activity, from more densely settled regions to the less densely ones, and from the core of the cities to their suburbs (Caplow 1954: 60).

It is also to be noted that migration is basically a social process. It assumes significance in the context of developing societies which are undergoing the process of change in their social, cultural and political aspects. Modern technology, education, industrialization and urbanization are some of the most important inducements for change in such societies. A close examination of the urban growth would show that it is primarily the result of the migration from rural areas whether for better economic opportunities or for other attractions held by the cities such as better educational and medical facilities.

This is one of the reasons why the social composition of the city is much more complex than that of the rural areas. In many cases, the city thus assumes a cosmopolitan look but in terms of interactions it reflects the diversity of cultures. Living in the city does affect their attitudes and behaviour to some extent but being constantly reinforced by the cultures in their places of origin the primordial values and institutions do manage to survive and even thrive sometimes.

This dualism provides the much required security and cultural impetus in an alien place. But, on the other hand, the cities remain as a conglomeration of rural enclaves. Such a situation is helpful for internal solidarity of the enclave members but it also proves to be a potential point of conflict between groups and cultures. Even when they live in intermixed settlements the social and cultural interactions are more often than not confined to the members of particular cultures. This has been largely so even in the towns of Sikkim, which I studied for the purpose of the present thesis.

#### Migrational History of the Plainsmen

The Himalayas as a whole have always attracted the plainsmen from various parts of India. Some of them are known to have visited and even lived in the Himalayas from very early times. They went there as pilgrims, travellers or for trade and adventure. To them, the Himalayas were not only an abode of gods and goddesses but held a lot of curiosity. The migration of the plainsmen to the Himalayas for economic purposes is but comparatively a recent phenomenon.

Sikkim is one such Himalayan territory where the presence of the plainsmen has been rather old. Though rather small in number, they constitute economically a significant group. The first plainsmen to have settled in Sikkim were the traders, engaged in the once flourishing Indo-Tibetan trade. They were mainly from the northern and western parts of India like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.

Their migration to Sikkim was noticeable after 1888 when J. C. White, the first political officer, was appointed there for channelizing the trade across the border and for helping the king of Sikkim in his administration. A large number of them were engaged in the trade with the Tibetans on the north and the Gorkhas on the west. Others from Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Orissa, Kerala, etc. also went there in smaller numbers to engage themselves in various subsidiary trade and other occupations. Among the business families of Sikkim a special mention must be made of the Somanis who had originally migrated from Hissar in Haryana. They had some business establishments in Kalimpong

as early as 1850s. After the British Residency was established in Sikkim in 1888 they moved to Gangtok as the sole cashiers of the British forces. Their commercial office in Gangtok was the pay office, state bank, state exchequer, department store, and the public treasury. They not only advanced credits to the British Residency but also to the king and the kazis or landlords of Sikkim. Hence, the Indo-Tibetan trade was virtually controlled by them.

This state of affairs continued upto 1968, when the administration established the State Bank of Sikkim with the help of the United Commercial Bank Limited of India. Though every Sikkimese, specially from the business community, was solicited to transfer his account to this new bank, the response was far from satisfactory. Thus the Jethmal Bhojraj Bank of the Somanis was, till as late as 1975, functioning as the state bank of Sikkim for all practical purposes (Sinha 1975:50).

Another large flow of the plainsmen into Sikkim was noticed after the 'merger' of Sikkim with India in 1975. They were mostly qualified persons looking for white-collar jobs though the

number of skilled and unskilled labourers was not insignificant.

It is quite well-known that the pre-1975 migrants from the plains of India had gone there basically for trade and the post-1975 migrants among them for business or service. It is important that statistical figures are presented to see to what extent is this broad classification true. This has been done in Table 1 given below.

Table 1. Reasons for migration of the Plainsmen, 1989

Community	No. of heads of households	Reasons	
		Business	Service
Marwari	105	100.0	-
Bihari	70	84.3	15.7
Bengali	8	37.5	62.5
Oriya	5	-	100.0
Keralite	3	33.3	66.7
Punjabi	15	-	100.0
Total	206	81.6	18.4

Source: Fieldwork

It is significant to note that an overwhelming majority (81.6 percent) of the people from the plains of India have migrated for business

and only 18.4 percent for service. Further, out of the six plains communities included in the sample above the only reason for migration of the Marwaris was business. It is seen above that the Biharis also had migrated primarily for business because only 15.7 percent respondents stated the reason for their migration to be service. The Oriyas and the Punjabis, on the other hand, had migrated entirely for service. Finally, the Bengalis and the Keralites had migrated for both business and service though about two third of the respondents of both communities had migrated for service and only one third for business.

Now the historicity of the plainsmen in Sikkim may be briefly discussed. Before starting the discussion on this, the following table based on 206 respondents from the six sampled towns of Sikkim may be presented. This table (Table 2) shows that more than two third of the total respondents had migrated before 20 years. The percentage of respondents migrated before 10 years is also quite large, which is because of 'merger' with India in 1975. This category of respondents, it may be admitted, was drawn basically from the communities other than the Marwaris and the Biharis.

Finally, it is to be pointed out that the percentage of plainsmen who had migrated to Sikkim before 40 years is also fairly significant, which shows a rather old inhabitation of them in Sikkim.

Table 2. Migration of the Plainsmen in Sikkim, 1989

Migrated Before	Total respondents	%
10 years	66	32.0
20 years	81	39.3
30 years	25	12.1
40 years	34	16.5
Total	206	100.0

Source: Fieldwork

It may be added that, like in most rural to urban migration involving long distances, the migration of the plainsmen to Sikkim was initially dominated by the males. It was only after they set up a comfortable means of living and found a place to accommodate their wives and children that they were joined by their family members and relatives. Most of them were bachelors at the time of their migration but they procured spouses from their own native places. Even today spouses are

procured from their own places of origin.

### Present Day Distribution

The plainsmen are distributed all over Sikkim. There is hardly any office or school where one does not find any plainsman. Since almost every village in Sikkim has one junior high school there are at least two plainsmen in almost every village. Some of them have been living in the most inhospitable conditions but they are there.

Let me now present the distribution of the plainsmen in Sikkim on the basis of figures adapted from the Census of 1981. Here I have computed the figures on the basis of the mother-tongue of the speakers and excluded the speakers of the languages like the Lepcha, Bhutia, and the Nepali. This stands for all the tables presented in this section.

Table 3 given below shows that the percentage of the plainsmen living in the "urban" areas of Sikkim is only slightly higher than their percentage in the "rural" areas. But it should be pointed out that the "rural" areas also include those townships and hats which do not have a municipality. As a matter of fact, excepting those who are working

in school, located in far-flung areas all the plainsmen may be safely admitted to be living in urban areas though such areas may not be administratively recognized as such. It is further seen that the percentage of households in the so-called "rural" areas are much higher than the percentage of their total persons. This is because most of the households belonging to the plainsmen and living in rural areas have one or two members only. This also shows that the stability of the plainsmen in the "urban" areas is more than their counterparts in the rural areas.

Table 3. Rural-Urban and Male-Female distribution of Plainsmen in Sikkim, 1981

Sector	No. of Households	Persons	Population	
			Male	Female
Total	4923	19,570	13,198	6372
%	8.2	6.2	67.4	32.6
Rural	2283	7865	5307	2558
%	46.4	40.2	67.5	32.5
Urban	2640	11,705	7801	3814
%	53.6	59.8	67.4	32.6

Source: Census of India 1981, Series 19, Sikkim Paper I of 1987, pp. 6-12.

Table 3 further shows that the male-female ratio among the plainsmen is roughly 2:1. This imbalance may be understood as a reflection of two things: one, such a scenario has emerged because of the relative instability of their society in Sikkim; and two, it may be taken as an indication of their relatively recent migration. But a closer look reveals that either of the explanations is not wholly correct. Such an imbalance has been caused largely by a very sizeable number of the post-75 migrants most of whom are single members in search of job or employment. They have largely chosen to remain single because of the nature of their service conditions. It is therefore quite natural that such gross imbalance in the male-female ratio is seen.

There is another important anthropological dimension which must be brought out in this context. It is a well-known fact that most of the plains communities have the practice of dowry payment. As a result, marriage of the males is often delayed because they have to collect enough money for the marriage of their sisters back home. Therefore, many males remain single even after achieving or over-growing the age of marriage. This cultural

dimension cannot be statistically supplemented here but my observation of such people confirms the importance of it.

Now the districtwise distribution of the plainsmen in Sikkim may be presented. This is shown in Table 4 presented below.

Table 4. Districtwise distribution of Plainsmen, 1981

District	Total Population	%	Total Plainsmen	% of Plainsmen to total pop.
East	1,38,762	43.9	13,859	10.0
West	75,192	23.8	1,697	2.3
South	75,976	24.0	3,075	4.0
North	26,455	8.3	939	3.5
Total	3,16,385	100.0	19,570	19.8

Source: Census of India 1981, Series 19, Sikkim Part I of 1987, pp. 6-12.

This table shows that the percentage of the plainsmen to total population is much higher (10.0) in the East district than that in the West (2.3), South (4.0), and the North (3.5). If we compare this distribution with the distribution of the total population in Sikkim it is clear that concentration of the plainsmen in the East and North districts is higher than in the West and South districts.

The greater concentration of the plainsmen in the East and North districts may be tentatively explained in terms of two related historical facts. The first is that these two districts have the old Indo-Tibetan trade route running through them. The plainsmen, particularly the earlier migrants among them being basically traders naturally chose to settle in these two districts rather than in the next two. Secondly, for strategic and administrative reasons these two districts have received greater attention of the state as well as the central governments.

Table 5 given below shows that of the total urban population in Sikkim, the plainsmen constitute as high as 22.2 percent, which is noteworthy. Moreover, it is significant to note that the plainsmen constitute more than one third of the total urban population in four out of seven major towns of Sikkim. In fact, Gyalshing, the district headquarters of the West district, has as high as 44.2 percent urban plainsmen out of the total urban population. But if we look at the absolute figures for the urban population from the plains it is very high (6773 persons) in Gangtok compared to 1392

persons in Singtam and 1183 persons in Jorethang. The total number of urban plainsmen in the remaining four towns does not exceed 1000. In fact, Mangan, according to the source, has only 195 plainsmen.

Now, the townwise distribution of the plainsmen in Sikkim may be shown with the help of the following table.

Table 5. Townwise distribution of Plainsmen, 1981

<u>Towns</u>	<u>Total urban population</u>	<u>Total urban Plainsmen</u>	<u>% of Plainsmen to total urban population</u>
Gangtok	36,747	6773	18.4
Rangpo	2,452	943	38.5
Singtam	4,043	1392	34.4
Namchi	1,444	524	36.3
Gyalshing	745	329	44.2
Jorethang	4,921	1183	24.0
Mangan	740	195	24.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,142</b>	<b>11,339</b>	<b>22.2</b>

Source: Census of India 1981, Series 19, Sikkim Part IIA and Part IIB, General Population Table and Primary Census Abstracts and Census of India 1981, Series 19, Sikkim Paper I of 1987, pp. 6-12.

It is also desirable to present figures on the communitywise distribution of the plainsmen in Sikkim. This is done here with the help of the following table.

Table 6. Communitywise distribution of Plainsmen, 1981

<u>Community</u>	<u>Total Pop.</u>	<u>% to the total pop.</u>	<u>% of males</u>	<u>% of females</u>
Assamese	62	0.3	53.2	46.8
Bengali	1,683	8.6	66.4	33.6
Gujarati	42	0.2	45.2	54.8
Hindi	14,961	76.4	67.5	32.5
Kannada	30	0.2	53.3	46.7
Malayalam	577	2.9	62.7	47.3
Kashmiri	15	0.1	46.7	53.3
Marathi	54	0.3	48.1	51.9
Oriya	88	0.4	64.8	35.2
Punjabi	489	2.5	55.6	44.4
Sindhi	4	0.02	25.0	75.0
Tamil	133	0.7	49.6	50.4
Telegu	154	0.8	50.0	50.0
Urdu	1,278	6.5	82.0	18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,570</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>67.4</b>	<b>32.6</b>

Source: Census of India, 1981, Series 19, Sikkim Paper I of 1987, pp. 7-13.

Table 6 presented above reveals some interesting features of the plains communities of Sikkim. First, of the 14 linguistic communities in Sikkim, the Hindi-speaking community forms the largest single group constituting as high as 76.4 percent of the total plainsmen in Sikkim. The Bengali and Urdu speakers are also quite numerous but their members are much less than that of the Hindi-speakers though much higher than that of the remaining communities individually. It should also be noted that the Urdu speakers are almost entirely from Bihar. It is to be noted further that the male-female ratio is rather balanced but the gross imbalance in this ratio among the Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu speakers has clearly determined the male-female ratio of the plainsmen as a whole.

This table also indicates the places from where they have migrated to Sikkim. Going by the linguistic backgrounds of the migrants to Sikkim they represent almost the entire India barring the north-east. The only community from the north-east India that has been represented is Assamese, but its total population in Sikkim in 1981 being only 62 persons it is safe to conclude that there are hardly any migrants from the north-east India.

One of the reasons why the north-east India has not been represented in Sikkim is that most of the territories of this region excluding Assam and Tripura, are recently granted statehood like Sikkim itself. Like Sikkim again, they were economically backward. Hence, large scale development activities were ushered in these states only after 60s or 70s, when Sikkim too experienced a heavy influx of people from outside. Therefore, it is quite natural that there are hardly any migrants from the north-east India to Sikkim.

#### Politico-Legal Status

According to the Constitution of India, an Indian citizen can settle, own property, and pursue a vocation in any part of India. But the very Constitution does not allow every Indian citizen to settle and own immovable property everywhere. There are many states in north-east India, for instance, where the administrative concern for tribal welfare and development is statutorily protected. The Inner Line Permit still discourages the Indian citizens from settling in the sparsely populated state of Arunachal Pradesh. In Jammu and Kashmir, though basically a non-tribal area,

any Indian citizen is not allowed to buy land. In most areas of the north-east India in particular, the non-tribals cannot buy land and often do not enjoy full political rights as Indian citizens.

In Sikkim also, not every Indian citizen has the access to buy land or settle in the strategically vulnerable parts of North Sikkim, the Lepcha reserve of Dzongu, and even some parts of the East Sikkim adjacent to the Chumbi Valley. In some of these areas even the tribal citizens of other parts of India are not allowed to settle or buy lands. Even the permission to visit some of these parts depends on the discretion of the District Collector, the Subdivisional Magistrate or the defence authorities.

Whatever may be the political and military considerations for curbing on the non-locals to settle in some parts of Sikkim, or for that matter even in other parts of north and north-east India, the plainsmen who have been living there for such a long time naturally feel treated as second class citizens. They often allege that they do not have full civil and political rights as Indian citizens though Sikkim is within the Indian territory. But

such allegations need to be carefully examined in the light of certain special administrative arrangements still in vogue in the bordering states like Sikkim. The specificity of their gradually becoming parts of India also need to be taken into consideration. In particular, the apprehension of the hillmen, particularly the tribal people, about the potentiality of exploitation by the plainsmen has to be noted. Verrier Elwin's policy of "controlled exposure" of the tribals to outsiders was sanctified by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, and despite a lapse of about thirty years since then this policy is still the guiding principle of Indian administrators.

It may be recalled here that Sikkim was a theocratic state ruled by hereditary monarchs until the end of 1974. Though elections were held in 1953, 1958, 1967, and 1973, such elections could not strictly be considered as democratic. Those were as a matter of fact sponsored by the Palace and many Sikkimese either did not participate or were debarred from participating in the same. Even in the 1973 election the voters were only those

who belonged to the three local communities, namely, Lepcha, Bhutia, and Nepali though not all of them were qualified to vote.

But it may be noted here that there were about six thousand plainsmen with Sikkim Subject Certificates under Sikkim Subject Regulation, 1961 but they could neither cast votes in the election of 1967 nor in the one held in 1973. It was for the first time in 1979 that they were allowed to not only cast votes but also contest for the open seats (Chakravorty 1989:3). For the 1979 October election, a total number of 19 open seats<sup>were</sup> available for Sikkim Legislative Assembly. There were 5 such seats each from the South and East districts and 7 from the West. All the 3 seats from the North district were reserved for the Lepcha-Bhutia tribes. The total number of seats reserved for them were 12: 2 were reserved for scheduled caste Nepalis and 1 for the Sangha or the monastery.

It may be further noted that on March 17, 1958 the State Council of Sikkim had only one open seat out of the total 20. This remained unchanged until the Government of Sikkim Act, 1972 changed the State Council into State Assembly. But under this Act, out of 32 total seats 12 were reserved

for Lepcha-Bhutias, 17 for Nepalis, 2 for the Sangha and 1 for the scheduled caste Nepalis. This was what is popularly known as the "Parity System". Therefore, there was hardly any scope for the plainmen to participate in the election then.

It was by a Presidential Ordinance passed in 1979 that the 17 seats, which were earlier reserved for the Nepalis, were opened. This Ordinance was later made into an Act under the 45th Amendment of the Indian Constitution. This has also been a major irritant to the Nepalis because it was their special privilege under the so-called "Parity System", which was withdrawn.

It was only the Janata Party led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji which never was critical of the rights extended to the plainmen since the very inception of this party in Sikkim. Most other political parties of Sikkim had been advocating that if the plainmen continued to settle there in such an alarming rate the general seats would soon be captured by them. The period between 1975 and 1980 did witness a phenomenal influx of the plainmen but most of them had the slightest

idea of the Sikkimese politics nor their migration to Sikkim could be ascertained to be politically motivated. It was not<sup>s</sup> likely a very simple act of migrating to a place which was badly in need of both skilled and unskilled personnels from outside to materialize its fast-expanding administrative and developmental networks. The local people did not face any problem of unemployment then but the large-scale influx of the people from the plains of India was not taken favourably specially by the political party leaders excepting those in the forefront of the Janata Party. They found in Kazi Lhendup Dorji an easy target for putting the blame for this.

As stated above, the plainsmen were granted the right to cast votes and contest elections but the changes in the political climate of Sikkim after that were not favourable for them. On the other hand, various political parties were constantly agitating against such political rights being granted to the plainsmen. On the other hand, there was a constant effort of the Nepali-dominated political parties to revive the old "Parity System", which would mean the closing of the open seats. The anti-plainsmen sentiment had risen to such a

height in Sikkim that no political party there was prepared to give any ticket to a plainsman. Even the Janata Party, which had a considerable following among the plainsmen, could not afford to offer a single party ticket to them.

One of the reasons why the Janata Party was reluctant to accommodate any plainsman as a candidate was because it was aware of the growing sentiment against the plainsmen. The political parties like the Sikkim Congress (Revolutionary) held Kazi Lhendup Dorji responsible for merging Sikkim with India and opening the 17 seats for all communities so that the plainsmen could contest elections. Thus, the Janata Party was branded as the party of the dhotiwalas, meaning the plainsmen.

Given this, the plainsmen were expected to be united under the banner of Nagarik Sangharsh Samity formed in May 1977 but they were not. If they were united, it was not at all difficult for them to send one representative at least from the Gangtok constituency. Of the total 7895 voters in this constituency, the plains voters singly accounted about half. But incidentally, instead

of one of them contesting the election from that constituency in 1979 there were 8 plainsmen out of the total 17 candidates in the fray. The contestants were Marwaris, Biharis, and also South Indians. Obviously, the voters were divided along ethnic lines within the plainsmen and the result was that the 8 contestants combinedly could secure only 684 votes. This showed that only about one fifth of their voters actually voted for their own candidates. Even D. P. Bhawanipuri, who was projected as the most prospective candidate amongst the plains candidates, could not secure more than 420 votes (Sengupta 1985:110).

It was only in 1985 assembly election that Balchand Sarda, a candidate from the Marwari community, for the first time won the election from the Gangtok constituency. He secured 2010 votes out of the total 4656 votes cast while his nearest rival secured 1749 votes (Chakravorty 1989:9-10). The plainsmen had probably learnt their lesson from their experience in the previous assembly election held in 1979. Though elected as an independent candidate, Sarda's victory was a major political phenomenon not only for the

Sikkimese plainsmen but also for the Sikkimese hillmen.

Some early migrants from the plains of India, particularly belonging to the Marwari community, own immovable properties like land and building within the municipality areas but today they are not allowed to buy any immovable property. This applies even to those who hold Sikkim Subject Certificates. They have established their shops in houses taken on hire. Even the trade licenses of a large number of businessmen from the plains of India are in the names of the local Sikkimese.

The "sons of the soil" policy of the Sikkimese government has been particularly detrimental to the interest of the plainsmen. Since the plainsmen are politically not the "sons of the soil" they are officially deprived of the state scholarships and the privileges of entering into medical and engineering colleges in the state government's quota and finance.

But in actual practice some of the plainsmen do get the privileges which are proclaimed to be meant only for the local Lepcha, Bhutia, and the Nepali community members. Some of the plainsmen

being in highly influential bureaucratic positions in Sikkim or being rich enough to fund the election expenses of the ruling parties the state government cannot be too strict about this. For instance, in 1984, the daughter of a medical officer from Delhi serving in Sikkim on deputation got a medical seat in Sikkim's quota at Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Post Graduate Medical and Education Research (JIPMER) in Pondicherry. In reaction to this there was a students' movement in June 1984. They demanded that the children of the plainsmen serving there on deputation basis should not be allowed to occupy the reserved seats in medical, engineering, and other educational institutions outside Sikkim. They even filed a writ petition in Sikkim High Court which passed a judgement against the daughter of that medical officer. Her seat was cancelled and her father returned to Delhi but JIPMER allowed her to continue her studies there on sympathetic ground.

Another incident took place in 1987. But this time it was the turn of the plainsmen. The tension first cropped up in Jorethang which is a major commercial town of the West district. The issue was the state government's refusal to issue

new trade permits or renew the old ones even for those who had Sikkim Subject Certificates issued in the days of Chogyal. Even the street hawkers and roadside cobblers were insisted that they get the trade licences. But when the applications were put forward the licences were not issued to them. As a result, the traders of Sikkim belonging to the plains communities undertook a programme of relay hunger strike at Gangtok. The strike continued for one whole week but the response of the state government was reported to be further harassment as if they had no right to conduct business in Sikkim (Sen 1987).

It is also reported that, in 1980, the Chief, Minister of Sikkim, in a press conference held at Gangtok, warned a "particular business community" (referring to the Marwaris) against financing some politicians of the opposition party to foment trouble in the state (Stat<sup>esman</sup> 23/12/80). According to him that particular business community had established a flourishing trade in the state but was unhappy with his government. He even initiated 10 corruption charges against a "few important persons" of the Kazi Lhendup Dorji government,

out of which six were against plainmen. He was further reported to have claimed that he had definite informations about the particular business community's financing a senior opposition leader of the state for campaigning against his government (ibid.).

### Conclusion

This chapter deals primarily with the migrational history, present day distribution and the politico-legal status of the plainmen in Sikkim.

About the migrational history there are two important points that need to be highlighted here. One, it is observed that the pre-1975 migration of the plainmen was mainly from the north-western parts of India whereas the post-1975 migration has been from almost all over India. Two, the pre-1975 migrants were by and large illiterates and had gone to Sikkim primarily for business whereas the post-1975 migrants are qualified and often highly educated persons who have gone there largely for service occupations. There are, of course, some plainmen who have gone there for different reasons from those mentioned above but the above classification stands true to

a very large extent.

About the distribution of the plainsmen it is clear that they have exhibited a sense of preference for urban areas to rural areas. This is nothing surprising about the plainsmen who had migrated before 1975 because their very occupation demanded that they settled in urban areas. But the apparent choice of the post-1975 plainsmen for urban areas needs to be briefly explained.

One of the most evident reasons for this is that most establishments, including educational institutions, were opened up first in the urban areas of Sikkim. Even now the non-educational establishments like offices, banks, and hospitals are almost entirely confined to the urban centres only. This has automatically controlled the spread of plains migrants to the rural areas. It is also to be noted that other infrastructural facilities like roads, electricity, water, and telephones were available only in the urban centres. At present, some of these facilities like electricity, road, and water supply are extended even to the remote rural areas but most of the plainsmen having gone there from relatively advanced areas do find

the urban areas a better choice. Further, the urban areas seem to provide them with some scope of social interaction with their own people and hence some sense of mutual security, if not some social life also.

On their politico-legal status it must be noted that the merger of Sikkim with the Union of India has given them more of economic and psychological security than legal or political. True, they have been granted the right to contest elections or cast votes from 1979 assembly election onwards but they still have to depend, for various purposes, on the pleasure of the political elites of Sikkim. For instance, trade licences are granted to them more often as a matter of political or personal favour rather than their legal right. But with regard to the "negative attitude" of the present government towards the plainsmen, it is difficult to take the various newspaper reports for granted. Such an attitude could very much be a political strategy of the party in power to keep the local voters happy because they know that there is a sustained demand from the public to control the migration of the plainsmen to Sikkim. In fact,

many local people reported that the state government is not at all sincere about its proclamations against the plainmen. They instead claimed that the party in power tacitly patronized the plainmen and criticized them over the microphones.