

## **CHAPTER THREE**

# **JUXTAPOSE: INTERNAL MIGRATION AND INFORMAL LABOURERS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Migration is the “survival instinct that drives humans to seek better prospects” (Sundari, 2005: 2295). The major drive for migration, mentioned by Census and NSSO, is an important facet to gauge how population movements are influenced by the state of labour market conditions of the nation. Various concepts and theoretical perceptions have already been discussed in the previous chapter. Structural and demographic changes, lure of cities and job facilities in the low tier are the prime factors that influence labour migration or labour mobility<sup>7</sup> in a neoliberal economy. Labour migration is an effect of the nation’s economic practices and also acts as a controlling parameter – that of adjustment processes in the global labour market. Jarman (2012) has rightly stated that “Political economists juxtapose the social position of labours with that of capitalists in a capitalist society” (Jarman, J. 2012:4).

It has already been discussed that people migrate for countless reasons, especially, when they migrate for economic reasons such as better employment, high wages and demand: the technological revolution thus plays an important role. In this context the role of ‘labour export’ agencies, middlemen, friends and relatives are also considerable. In this chapter I intend to discuss and analyse why and how labour migration is mostly related to certain types of employment structures and specific economic activities.

### **3.2 To and Fro - New Dimension of Internal Labour Migration**

In India, permanent or semi-permanent displacement of population and workforce had co-existed with the circulatory movement of the population between the agrarian economy and industrial economy and between the rural and urban areas, which are mostly absorbed in the informal sector of the economy (De Haan, 1999:36). Pioneer work by Rao (1991) on Palamur labour in Andhra Pradesh and de Haan’s (2002: 115-42) remarkable study on migration in Western Bihar, or Srivastava and Ali’s 1981 work of labour from Bundelkhand proved that the seasonal and circular

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<sup>7</sup> The terms Labour mobility and Labour migration are used interchangeably.

migration has a part in the livelihood portfolio of poor people in India since long ago. Haan (2002) asserts that the cause of social exclusion does not uniformly impact labour migration. The social experience and consequences of migration can be shaped by class and gender along with social networks and household structures.

The pressure of a huge population on limited resources inspires migration, while rural-urban migration and urbanisation are the natural outcomes of the transformation of agro-based economy into industrial economy. In a study by Mukherjee (1991: 203-45) on “Inter-state migration and regional disparities in India,” it is stated that in India, inter-state migration of population takes place mostly due to poverty, underdevelopment, spatial disorganisation, regional and social disparities, rural stagnation and so on. Structural transformation in the 1990s and fluidity of capital have persuaded the mobility of population and workers in terms of national and international in India. In recent time, various changes in India are controlling the pattern and pace of migration. Dyson and Visaria (2004: 108-29) observe that India is experiencing different changes in the migration pattern.

Internal migration became a subject of research due to its impact on population change and its socio-economic implications. It acts as a sensitive barometer of changes in the social, cultural and economic fields as well as on environment. In India internal migration is perfectly traceable back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though, in that particular period, the country exclusively witnessed the huge migration of labourers into overseas territories. This migration was in the form of the emigration of indentured laboures.<sup>8</sup> This system was completely abolished in the year 1920. Apart from the international movement of population in India, internal migration also has its own historical background. Internal migration is typically defined as the physical mobility of people within the political boundary of their own country but across the frontiers of their home provinces. The Census Department of India, 1971 defined internal migration as “any movement within the political boundaries of a nation, which results in a change of the usual place of residence. It may consist of the crossing of a village or town boundary as a minimum condition for qualifying in the category of movement as internal migration” (Census of India, 1971: 4). In India internal migration has various facets, where we can identify various special types of movement with different reasons and forms. When people leave for a temporary period of time, it is not considered as migration in a demographic point of view, though family and individual migration had played an important role in

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<sup>8</sup> Indentured laboures: Indenture was a halfway between free labour and slavery and also different from peonage and serfdom. It was adapted like slavery and recruitment of labour through migration. It began after the abolition of slavery.

the growth and distribution of population (Ghosh, B.N. 1985: 34). These entire practices give effect directly to the receiving as well as sending of areas in terms of population and social changes. There has been a firm increase in the number of migrants in India. In 1961 there were only 144 million migrants by place of birth and the number has become 307 million in 2001. Interstate migrants have been estimated to be 3.6% of the total population in 2011 Census.

Table no. 3.1 **Inter-State migration stream (Duration 0-9 Years) India.**

Types/streams of migration	All internal migrants (persons)	
	2001	2011
Urban- Urban	15.2%	22.6%
Urban- Rural	6.3%	7.9%
Rural- Urban	21.8%	22.1%
Rural-Rural	26.6%	47.4%

**Source:** Census of India, 2001, 2011. Data Highlight - Table D2.

Intra state and the intra district migration was more prominent among the migrants in rural areas than among the migrants in urban areas (NSS 64<sup>th</sup> Round, 2007-08). According to NSS report no. 533, in India nearly 25% of male migrants and 3% of female migrants had moved with probable duration of stay for 12 months or more and in urban areas nearly 26% male and 11% female migrants were expected to stay at the place of enumeration for 12 months or more (*ibid*). Over time, the Indian census has shown a continuous increase of interstate migration. According to census 2001 there is a variation (%) in number of migrants by place of birth -54.5% for inter-state migrants (Data Highlights- Table D1, D2 AND D3, Census of India). Table no 3.1. shows that migration pattern (2011) maintains the tradition of a high rate of rural to rural migration rate (47.4%) and between 2001 and 2011 Census; rural-urban migration has increased marginally (21.8% to 22.1% respectively). In urban India (2011 Census), nearly 33% male migrants work in traditional services like hotels, wholesale and retail business and transport, 27% are in manufacturing sectors and 16% are in other sectors (real estate, health etc.).

The NSSO particularly shows an increase in inter-state migration between 1999-2000 and 2007-2008 in the two urban streams (Srivastava, Ravi, 2012). Distribution of internal migration of India in terms of rural to urban stream was quite high with 195 people per 1000 (NSS Report no. 533.2007-08). Inter-state migration increased from 19.9% to 22.9% (*ibid*). NSS 64<sup>th</sup> round shows minor increase in rural to urban and urban to urban migration through inter-state migration in 2007-08. Times of India, 18 October 2013, reported that internal migrants in India are about to touch 400 million (2011 census).

Globalisation has led to different changes in the pattern of demand for workers and as a result also on the structure of national and international labour market. Changes in various factors in recent decades like infrastructural improvement, telecommunications improvement are reducing different cost factors and risk factors, which generate available options for migration. These changes also create certain types of demand for workers, which create 'race to the bottom' and an increase in informal employment (Srivastava, Ravi, 2012: 1-40). Deshingkar and Start (2003) avow that the short term, seasonal and circular labour migration is one of the most popular livelihood strategies for rural Indian people. So, the changes in development and the demand for labourers are likely to depend on each other.

NSSO suggests eighteen various possibilities of migrations. These reasons vary in the case of male and female. Census and NSS confirm that among all reasons there is an increase in employment-related migration. Maximum increase in this rate has been observed in 1981 followed by 2001. Different NSSO reports established the fact that migration rate is decreasing for the employment related reasons. According to the 49<sup>th</sup> round (1993) it was 477 persons per 1000 for rural areas and 415 persons per 1000 persons, which became less in the 64<sup>th</sup> round (2007-2008) - 286 persons per 1000 for rural areas but surprisingly increased for urban areas with 557 persons per 1000 (Statement 4.13, Report No. 533, 2007-2008, NSSO). It is basically due to the growth of urban population. The role of migration in the increase of urban population and the rate of urbanisation are very significant. In this chapter, I intend to correlate all the possibilities of migration in Sikkim from the plain areas with the reasons proposed by NSSO (64<sup>th</sup> round). Economic survey 2016-2017 reveals that the inter-state migration of workers in India has increased significantly to 9 million annually within 2011 and 2016. It also throws light on the fact that inter-state labour mobility was around 5 to 6.5 million in 2001 to 2011. Sikkim has positive net migration rate with +0.26% (1991 to 2001). This positive growth value indicates that in-migration is higher than the out-migration (Rajan, and Chyrmang, 2016: 96-153). I have made an attempt to find out various causes of in-

migration in Sikkim's informal sector, especially in Singtam and Rangpo towns and the problems faced by the migrants in their native places.

### **3.3 Economy/ Economics as the Main Driving Force for Migration (Indian Context)**

In India, migration takes place not only due to the so-called pull factors of the destination places but also due to poverty, natural calamities, unemployment and underdevelopment in the place of origin. Migration happens especially due to regional discrepancy in development. In the era of globalisation, migration and neo-liberal urban development are the results of direct manifestations. India stands among the top five countries of the world in terms of gross domestic product but only 31.16 percent of its population lived in cities and towns in 2011, and also is the least urbanised country among the top 10 economies of the world. There are numerous evidences in India to advocate that the country is growing fast in terms of overall development with regional disparity. The issue of composition of GDP aside, India has practiced jobless growth, mostly in rural areas. India has continued an annual growth rate of GDP at over 5% in the last decade but no one notices an improvement in number of jobs within the periods 2004-05 and 2009-10. A total of 23.3 million and 4.02 million jobs were lost in agriculture and manufacturing respectively. These losses were offset by a gain of 25.89 million jobs in non-manufacturing and 2.7 million jobs in services. On the whole, only 1.74 million new jobs were introduced. The overall employment improvement is estimated at 0.01 (Government of India 2011). In the past ten years (1999-00 and 2009-10), there has been a minimum decrease in unemployment rate in rural and urban areas (except in the case of rural female). This is only one part of the story; in reality unemployment rate in the rural and urban India does not truly reflect the labour market situation and job opportunities in any state. Another part of the story can be better disclosed by the underemployment rates in rural and urban areas. Practical scenario in rural India is likely to be different, where 10 (4.9) percent of male and 7 (4.5) percent of female workers were eager to do additional work/or sought additional work (Chandrasekhar, S and Sharma, A. 2014). A preponderance of these workers stated that their present occupation is not remunerative enough. This situation would be one of the probable reasons for an increase in rural-urban migration, especially in developing countries. The size of various streams of migration is determined by the choice of institution as well as with the relationship of the source area with the destination centre. Decades ago, Kingsley Davis (1951) in his pioneering work pointed out that Indians were less mobile. He concluded his idea based on inter-state migration which stood at 3.6% in 1931 compared to 23% in United States in 1940 (Bhagat, R. 2014). The latest source of migration data (2011) divulges that inter-state migration based on

POLR is only 41 million whereas within state migrants' number is 268 million (Bhagat, R.B. and Mohanty, S. 2009:5-20). It is surprising to see that in an around 30% of India's population is internally mobile; more over the number remained stable since the last several decades. It is also consistent in the NSSO data. Net inter-state migration in India during 2007-2008 (NSSO) has been categorised for different states but for Sikkim it was almost negligible due to very small sample available.

Labour migrants reshape and accelerate Indian economy through balancing human capital. It also enables the attainment of different new skills and changes the standard of livelihood (Korra, Vijay. 2011:52-71). Labour migration acts as an important feature in affecting and controlling the socio-economic development of the country. NSSO (2007-08) and a limited obtainable data in 2011 Census of India have stated that about 28.3% (2011 Indian Census does not include workers) migrants (age 15-59) are involved in Indian workforce. This labour migration has always played a noteworthy, if not primary role, in the processes of urbanisation (Mitra, Arup, and Mayumi Murayam. 2011: 25-51), since migration for work is the leading driver/motivation of/for migration, especially for rural areas to urban ones.

Table no. 3.2

**Trends in migration rates in urban India  
1981-2008 (migrants per 100 persons)**

Census/NSS	Census			NSS		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>1981-1983</b>	33.2	40.8	36.8	27.0	36.6	31.6
<b>1991-1993</b>	26.3	36.2	31.0	23.9	38.2	30.7
<b>2000-2001</b>	32.0	39.4	35.5	25.7	41.8	33.4
<b>2008</b>	NA	NA	NA	25.9	45.6	35.4

**Source:** Census of India 1981-2001 and NSSO, 2010.

Note: migration rates exclude Assam for 1981 census and Jammu and Kashmir for 1991 census, where the census was not conducted.

Indian Census 2011 shows that there are 454 million migrants in India, which is more than two times the number in 1991. Nearly 6 million migrants cross inter-state boundary, but contrastingly 14.6 million people migrate for work or business purpose and out of these 43% cross the state boundary. Rural-urban migration aimed at work opportunities is maximum for male people: according to the 2011 Census it is 49.7%. Table 4.3 shows that rural-urban stream of migration is

dominantly for work/business purpose. So, inter-state migration plays an important role in employment. There is a new database called Cohort-based Migration [CMM] (Outlook, 31 January 2017) prepared from Census of India, 2011 and railway passenger traffic flows by the Railways Ministry to understand labour mobility trends in the country. Dr. Arvind Subramanian, chief economic adviser to the Ministry of Finance stated that “The first-ever estimates of internal work-related migration using railways data for the period 2011-2016 indicate an annual average flow of close to 9 million migrant people between the states. Both these estimates are significantly greater than the annual average flow of about 4 million suggested by successive Censuses and higher than previously estimated by any study” (*ibid.*). The growth rate of labour migration during 2001 to 2011 was double that of the past decade. The growth rate is rising in and around 4.5 % per annum. The perception is that this acceleration of labour migration is a catalyst for the multitude of informal economic opportunities.

Table no. 3.3. **Reasons and Streams of Intercensal Migration in India**  
(% share of each stream)

Streams	Work/Business		Education		Marriage		Family Related		Others		Total	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
<b>Rural-Rural</b>	9.3	6.4	1.9	2.7	61.2	59.0	19.4	24.1	8.3	7.7	56.3	47.4
<b>Urban-Urban</b>	21.8	17.5	4.3	3.4	21.9	18.4	42.6	47.9	9.5	12.9	15.2	22.6
<b>Rural-Urban</b>	29.9	24.3	4.9	4.8	21.8	22.4	34.5	40.6	8.8	7.9	21.82	22.1
<b>Urban-Rural</b>	14.5	8.9	3.0	2.7	28.1	25.5	42.9	55.6	11.4	7.3	6.6	7.9

**Source:** Report of the Working Group on Migration, January 2017. Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India.

### **3.4 Poverty, Uneven Development and Migration**

In India, migration takes place mostly due to poverty, unemployment, natural calamities, and underdevelopment at the place of origin, but in this globalised period betterment of the quality of life is becoming another key parameter by which the causes for such migrations can be assessed. India is experiencing a higher rate of in-migration in the states in the west, Delhi and the nearby areas in the north. Areas with the lowest in-migration rate are the poorest states in the north and east, which include Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Orissa. This information again can be correlated with the relative wealth of states and the rate of in-migration. For example, Delhi, Maharashtra, and

Gujarat have significant in-migration and have higher levels of state domestic product. The same trends of high in-migration have been observed in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Mizoram (Krishan G. 2007: 182-187). Regional variation in per capita income has risen in the post-reform period. The ‘convergence hypothesis’<sup>9</sup> is the keystone of neo classical optimism on market growth. It also suggests that most of the studies are concerned with the inter-regional disparities in terms of interstate differences in positive growth recital in the post-reform period (Baddeley, McNay and Cassen, 2006: 1000-1022; Bhattacharya and Sakthivel, 2004: 1071-1077; Dasgupta et.al, 2000: 316-328). The correlation coefficient between state-level wealth and in-migration rates in India is 0.82, (Castaldo, Deshingkar; and Mckay. 2012), which is undoubtedly a broad manifestation that people are moving from poorer to richer areas in India.

The effect of migration to solve inequality and poverty is still not very clear to us. However, the work by Haan and Roglay (2002) is able to explore some evidences and establish the fact that migration can reduce source and host areas. They also point out that out-migration and development is a simultaneous process and the developmental processes in source areas do not influence the rate of out-migration. It has been truly said that “Better-off migrants are ‘pulled’ towards better job prospects, while the poor are ‘pushed’. ‘Push’ and ‘pull’ migrations are the twin children of inequality in the same sort of village; but they are also sources of new inequality” (*ibid*: 5). Deshingkar (2010) claimed that it is not positively true that poor will not be poorer/will remain poor after migration because it is difficult to measure poverty and other multiple deficiencies (Deshingkar, 2010: vii). She could only have acknowledged a few areas as a positive socio-economic achievement – better access of food and health facilities, faster repay of debt, borrowing capacity etc., in addition to various psychosocial problems.

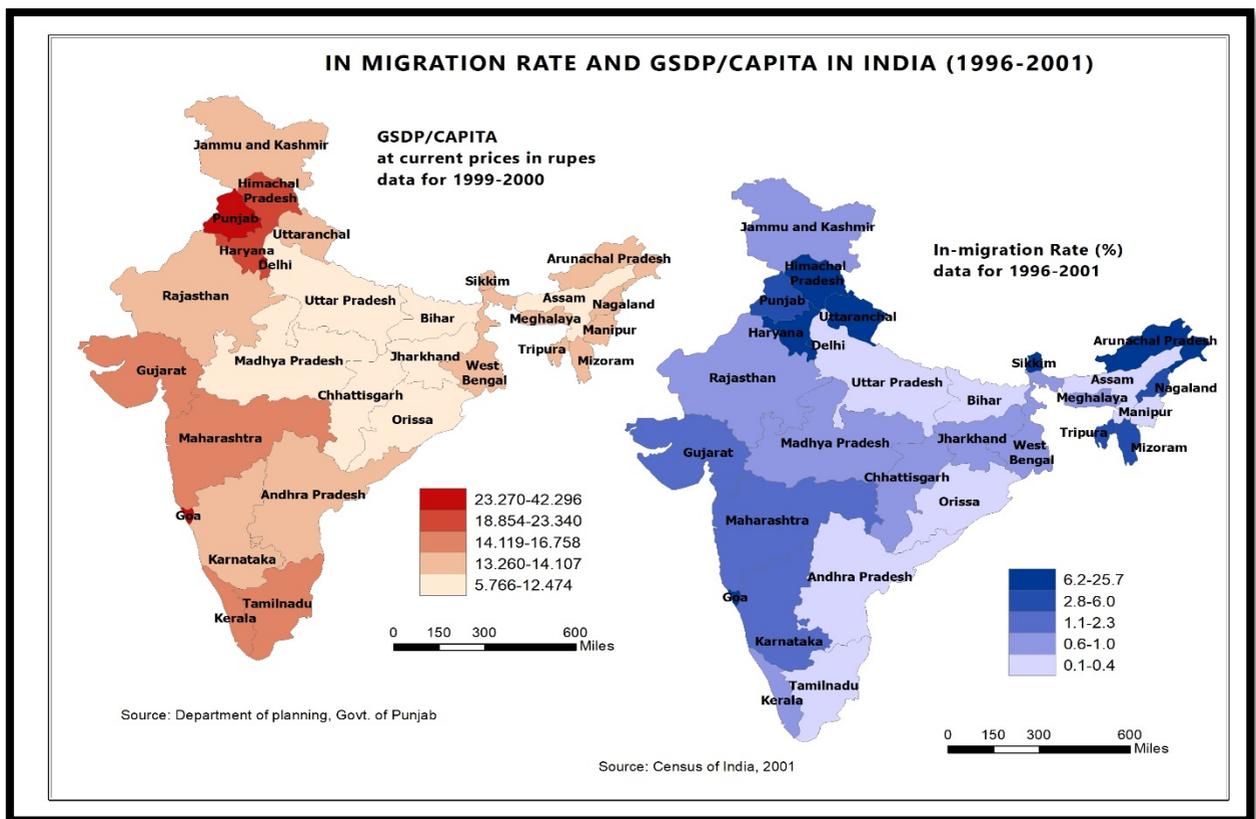
Different studies from the decennial census explore some stimulating facts – those related with link between level of development and migration, particularly in terms of per capita income. The map above represents the statistics that the states which have the highest level of GSDP also experience a high rate of migration. Alice Charles (Project Lead, Cities, World Economic Forum) explains that migrants are mainly drawn towards towns and cities for economic, social and creative opportunities. Bihar is a state with one of the maximum outflows of domestic migrants. This state has a per-capita income approximately equivalent to Somalia’s (USD 520), and 3.4 children per

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<sup>9</sup> Convergence hypothesis: This idea is also known as catch-up effect in economics. It states that poor economies’ per capita income grows faster in rate than richer economies. Eventually, all economies converge in terms of per capita income. Nair (1971), Majumdar and Kapoor (1980), Dholakia (1994), Cashin and Sahey (1996) and many others are working on Convergence Hypothesis in Indian Scenario.

woman is the birth rate. On the other hand, Kerala (for example), the destination for in-migrants, has four times more per capita income (USD 2350) than Bihar, and has a birth rate of 1.6 children per woman. Sikkim and Mizoram experience higher rate of in-migration (Krishna.G.2007:182-87) among the North Eastern states and these states also had a nominal GSDP growth rate in the year 2013-14 at 24.30% and 27.86% respectively (Planning Commission, Government of India, 2014) which are far more than that of the country as a whole.

Fig. no. 3.1. **In Migration Rate and GSDP/ Capita in India (1996-2001).**



### 3.5. Sikkim as a Case Study

#### 3.5.1. Historical Background of Labour Migration in Sikkim

It is essential to understand the significance of contemporary economic structure and growth in the light of neoliberal ideologies, the pre-merger economic structure and the transformation processes in Sikkim. The earliest settlers, namely the Lepchas were semi-nomadic in nature with a primitive communal society. In the later period emerged the concept of private property among the Lepchas (G. Gorer, 1938:70, and C. Nakane.1966:261).

The history of Sikkim dates back to the year 1641 when Tibetans were invading in great numbers along with a small group of the Lepcha tribe. The first phase of state's history is linked to the "blood treaty", which was signed in 1641 between the Bhutias and the Lepchas. The second phase started in and around 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Nepal gradually intruded into the Sikkimese territory. Nepali migration was larger in scale in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century too. The British were interested in Sikkim because of their trade and political interests in Tibet. Sikkim came under British influence when the Anglo-Nepali war began (1814-15). Sikkim became a de facto territory in 1861 when the treaty of Titalia, which was signed between the kingdom of Sikkim and the East India Company (1817), was further revised (Debnath J.C. 2009:45). Noteworthy advancement was observed at the time of colonial rule. Due to intrusion of budgetary system in Sikkim's feudalist society, the amount of revenue increased and it was used for the construction of public works - especially roads. In 1906, for the first time Gangtok was linked with India by a wheeled traffic. It was a remarkable time for Sikkim's economic history. In a nutshell the issue of migration to Sikkim is largely confined to the issue of in-migration, as the region has always been historically a migrant receiving area, right from the early migration of the Bhutia community from Tibet in the 17th century, followed by the 19th century mass migration of Nepalese to the 20th century migration of Indian plainsmen, and the influx continues till date. Development of trade and commerce in the colonial time was thus a guiding force for the introduction of capitalism in Sikkim. "There were many *Indian businessmen* who contributed to the capitalist development in Sikkim" (D.D Kosambi.1956:7-10). This participation rate has increased after Independence and the subsequent treaty between Sikkim and India. The introduction of the Indian Rupee pushed up the entire economic system of Sikkim and developed a new economic class that started to earn money through their association with various governmental projects as contractors or wage earners. In this transitional period, commodification of labour power also became an integral part of capitalism. The presence of labour power as commodity was very much present since the colonial time in Sikkim, as Sweezy (1946:56) remarked "the differentia specifica of capitalism". Due to the infrastructural development in Sikkim, there was a huge scope for employment; the British especially employed a large number of wage labourers. The payment for the labour in terms of money during the colonial period was the new phenomenon in the history of Sikkim. In this way British tried to put an end to the forced labour system in Sikkim. The elimination of forced labour and the introduction of paid labour helped Sikkim take a step forward towards capitalism. In the British period Sikkim was not

able to develop full-fledged capitalism. The transition from a colonial to a capitalist phase/economy was much longer because the industrial growth was not subsequent to the British period. Only the traditional Bhutias (indigenous) and few Marwari plainsmen were engaged in trade with Tibet-Sikkim and India-Sikkim respectively. Sikkim Debt Law (1910)<sup>10</sup> was another important phase when Marwari money-lenders left Sikkim because their businesses were declining due to the implementation of this new law.

The entire ethnic picture changed in Sikkim when India became independent and British left India. This also changed the pattern of Indo-Sikkimese relationship. After 1947, Sikkim faced various grim situations in terms of its socio-political contexts. However, in 1975 Sikkim became a full-fledged state of Indian Territory. Sikkim always attracted the plainsmen from various parts of India with various necessities. Thus, migration of plainsmen to Sikkim was not a very new practice. It was in the form of pilgrims, travelers or traders; rather the migration for economic wellbeing is comparatively recent phenomenon. Sikkim is one of the popular Himalayan territories where presence of plainsmen is quite old. A large number of people were engaged in Indo-Tibetan trade in the north and with Gorkhas in the west. Others from Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Kerala, and Orissa were also involved in different ancillary trades and other occupations. Somanis, who migrated from Haryana, went to Gangtok as the sole cashiers of British Forces. Another large influx of plainsmen in Sikkim has been observed after the 'merger' of Sikkim with India (1975)<sup>11</sup>. Some people were specially qualified in looking for white-collar jobs in different administrative sectors and some were skilled and unskilled labourers. Labourers from the plains are distributed all over Sikkim.

### **3.5.2. Evaluation of Sikkim's Economy**

Evaluation of Sikkim's economy is interesting to know. It has been documented that the earliest Lepchas were tribal and semi-nomadic in nature with a primitive communal society. After that when the Bhutias came, they mostly followed Tibetan ideas and cultures, their economy was typically feudal in character, but Sikkim was following free employment of peasantry due to the influence of Tibetan ideology. Significant progression was noticed in Sikkim economy immediately after the British control (1889). Rigorous administrative measures also increased the state's

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<sup>10</sup> Sikkim Debt Law: This law was enacted in 1910 to measure rural indebtedness. Minimum rate of interest to be charged on the farmers and money lenders were prohibited.

<sup>11</sup> Sikkim merger with India: Indian Constitution through 36<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act, 1975

revenue. This was the transition period, when Sikkim's feudal economic structure was moving towards capitalism. We know that 'transition' is unconditionally of huge interest to the Marxist view. Robert Brenner (1977: 104) described the changes in the mode of production, as development through production actually explains the development of the relations with the production as well as of the society as a whole (Hilton, R.H. 1982: 42). Feudal mode of production was conspicuous in consumption, and not in accumulation. Sikkim experienced proper feudalistic economy just after the *Nepali* influx during the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because it led to permanent cultivation in Sikkim. Pirenne (1968:171-185), Belgian economic historian, put emphasis on trade as a prime reason for the emergence of capitalism. The equation of capitalism through the profit from trade has also been observed by the work of the non-Marxist historian Braudel (1982) and by sociologist Max Weber (1905:19-35). In the case of Sikkim, the Bhutias were engaged in pasturage and trade, and there was no competition with other existing communities. So, there was a coexistence of feudal economy and rising capitalism, but monetisation was absent at that time and 'labour power' was not identified as a commodity. Sweezy and Baran (1966) recognised various considerable stages and changes in feudal society. In Sikkim, the beginning and aftermath of a feudal society cannot be considered as 'relatively primitive'. There is a certain gap between the end of feudalism and rise of capitalism – Maurice Dobb (1946) tried to focus on this gap. Marx observed that there was a long persistent gap (transition period) while discussing the rise of capitalism in Western Europe. The time frame and adaptability was not same worldwide – depending on fundamental socio-economic structure. In this context Marx said, "...the economic structure of Capitalist society grows out of economic structure of feudal society. The dissolution of one sets free the elements of the latter." (1961: 715). Sikkim experienced a prolonged feudal economic structure. Introduction of paid labour (commodifying labour), monetisation, establishment of bureaucratic set up, intervention of state and budgetary system were not able to develop a full-fledged capitalist society in Sikkim. In the British period various public construction works, especially focused on transport and communication took place. In 1906, Gangtok was linked with the Indian Territory by wheeled traffic. The natural impact of this development led to the extension of trade and commerce in Sikkim. Especially, it accelerated Indo-Tibetan trade. Sikkim became an important trade route, which gave a great impetus to the transformation of Sikkim's economy – from feudalistic system to that of a concept of private property – by giving an ultimate insight into capitalism and generating an open system in the state's economy. After the full-fledged introduction of Indian Rupee in Sikkim, the entire economy changed, and a new economic class emerged. These people were

engaged in different government/public projects or worked as wage-earners. The role of money as a “store of wealth” provided a new motivation to the state’s economy. It actually sowed the seeds of a modern, capitalist economy. British administrators had concentrated on various construction works, which created a large demand for wage-labourers. In this regards “Frank hold that in determining an economic and social system as feudal or capitalist, the crucial aspect to consider is *whether the system is closed or not*. On that account it can certainly be said that the British heralded the growth of capitalism in Sikkim by making the country open” (Debnath, 2009: 46). Nepali migrant labourers used to vend their labour as a commodity that was bought by the British. The development of trade, commerce, and infrastructural developments create different job possibilities for the other native states also. Introduction of paid labour system by the British essentially developed the capitalist economy in Sikkim. Land and labour – two fundamental factors of production -- had become the manifestation of commodity. Participation of entrepreneurship by the Sikkimese people was not prominent because of the dearth of raw materials and capital along with the lack of technological knowledge. Moreover, Indian businessmen were not too free even though they were willing to take all the legitimate risks of the business and also ensured to provide better technology and more capital investment in the Sikkim’s economy. The mode of production was reshaped through privatisation, monetisation and flexibility (Naredo, 2006). Indian businessmen were debarred from different facilities which hindered overall economic development. Afterwards, the state took the role of promoting and enhancing of entrepreneurial activities through different corrective measures. The state tried to eradicate the previous obstacles to the liberty of enterprises by taking active part in different entrepreneurial projects. Distillation of wine and liquor was the first modern private industry to be set up at Singtam in 1955; a Government Fruit Preservation factory was also set up at the same place just the following year. These enterprises played a major role in creating a demand for wage-labourers, especially in the low layered economic activities.

In 1976, the establishment of the Directorate of Industries brought a noteworthy change in the industrial activities of the state. The Registration of Companies Act, Sikkim, 1961(Amendment Act no.3, 1989) also changed the entire scenario of economic activities. This act made the provision for the companies to get registration in order to support the industrialisation processes in the state. Nearly 1,500 units have been granted temporary registration from 1976 onwards. Most of them (70%) are located in East district of the state. It shows a completely disproportional concentration of industries within a specific geographical area. In this context it has been rightly said in various

literatures that a large frame of work exists in ethnic entrepreneurship and its appearance (Light, I. 2005).

### **3.5.3. Post-merger Scenario in Sikkim**

Any developing society undergoes the processes of various changes in their social, cultural, demographic, political and economic aspects. Post-merger Sikkim (from 1975), for instance, experienced all such changes. It is to be noted that in the pre-merger period migration from plains took place mainly for trade, but the post-merger scenario facilitates further to involve in service industry. It has been noticed that in recent times there is a popular trend of migration of people from the plains to Singtam and Rangpo town, basically as workers, which has changed the development dynamics. The present chapter explains how such discursive shifts of the exodus from plains in the context of migration in the informal economy and livelihood serve as a survival strategy to integrate the heterogeneous nature of causes of migration in Singtam and Rangpo towns of East Sikkim. Plains to hills movement considers two different physical boundaries as well as two administrative boundaries.

Migration in Sikkim, particularly to Rangpo and Singtam towns is constituted prodigiously of migrants from multi-ethnic and multi-language speaking states, though the main movement of labour were seemingly entrenched in its historical perspectives, cultural links and mostly due to economic associations. The Indo-Sikkim treaty, 1950 and the Article VII (I) helped to continue free movement between India and Sikkim after India's Independence. The Article VII (a), (b) also allowed the citizen of both the countries to continue their trade and commerce and right to hold property on each other's terrain. Post-merger situation was totally dissimilar. Article 371-F was included in the Indian Constitution through 36<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act in 1975; it was an agreement between Sikkim and Indian Union for the merger. At the same time, Article 371-F (k) was also enacted to protect Sikkim's old laws. This law ghettoises the Sikkimese and the non-Sikkimese. The non-Sikkimese are not allowed to hold any property and state government jobs, but they can carry on with central government jobs, trades and business and the like.

The spatial dynamics of urban development and configuration of an area has become an important aspect in understanding the contemporary socio-economic structure – same happens in Sikkim. The transition of economic structure primarily changes the social and economic practices; secondly, it includes development, which leads to the gap between core and peripheral areas (Herold, Couclelis,

and Clarke, 2005: 369-399). These developments denote a dispersal of the effect of urban growth on the rural hinterland. These processes are changing the state’s economic activities from primary to secondary, to tertiary and so on. The symmetrical growth quantum of migration flow from the neighbouring states is a direct stimulus on the urban growth and its related economic changes. Population density in Sikkim has increased from 45 per sq. km. (2001) to 86 per sq. km. (2011), which hints at considerable urban development. Gradually, Sikkim government started to play an important role in increasing the processes of urban development. Local administration, accompanied by different private agents, has helped to develop city-based modern methods in Sikkim, especially in the East and South districts. Contemporary Sikkim has become a popular tourist spot in northeast India. Its economy is driven through secondary sectors like hydroelectric power generation and constructions, and by tertiary sectors like hotels, trade, transport and communication etc.

Fig no. 3.2

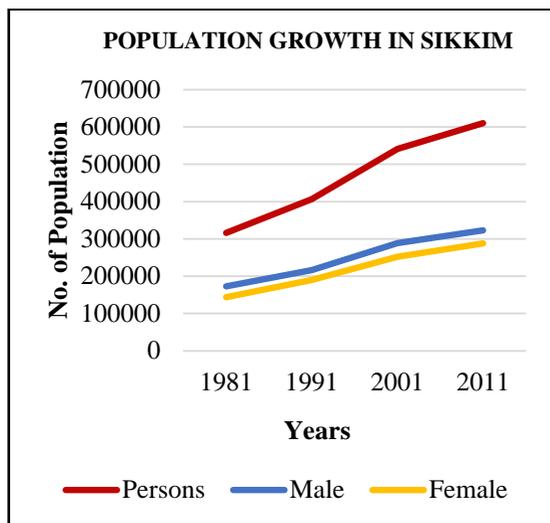
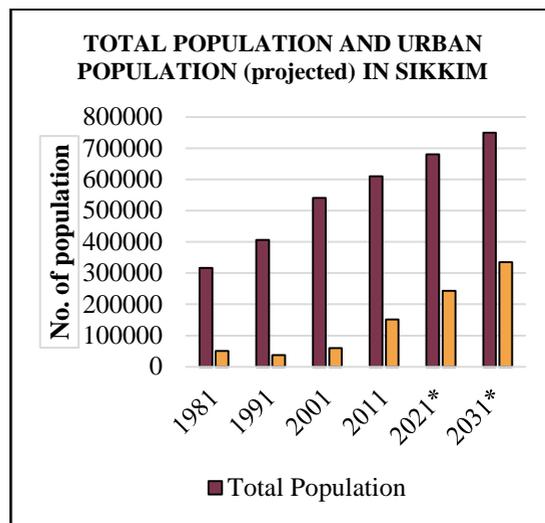


Fig no. 3.3



**Source:** District Census Handbook, 1981, 1991 and Primary Census Abstract 2001 & 2011.

\*Projected population from Census of India.

Figure no 3.2 shows the trend of population growth in Sikkim since post-merger period. The line graph represents the positive growth trend in last four decades. Figure no. 3.3 shows a positive participation rate of urban population in the last four decades. It also shows a projected urban population contribution in the forthcoming times. In 1981, the percentage share of urban population in total population was 16.15%, which increased to 24.84% in 2011. This entire drift projects a

slow but steady urban growth in post-merger Sikkim. Sikkim's in migration (2001 Census) from the other states was 22,519 and it has increased to 2,65,158 in the 2011 Census.

Table no. 3.4 **Number of Migrants by Place of Last Residence in Sikkim (2011)**

	<b>Duration of residence</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Work or employment</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>All duration</b>				
<b>Total</b>	265158	4991	53547	52763
<b>Rural</b>	173196	3061	35606	22373
<b>Urban</b>	51699	1639	12722	8547
<b>Less than one year</b>				
<b>Total</b>	22632	151	7599	5372
<b>Rural</b>	13031	94	4917	1651
<b>Urban</b>	4957	42	1893	715
<b>Duration1- 4 years</b>				
<b>Total</b>	56901	597	15161	8972
<b>Rural</b>	34792	357	8844	3564
<b>Urban</b>	13270	204	4037	1553
<b>Duration 5-9years</b>				
<b>Total</b>	42636	688	7553	7280
<b>Rural</b>	28073	417	5278	3188
<b>Urban</b>	9056	236	1821	1247
<b>10 years &amp;above</b>				
<b>Total</b>	142721	3555	23227	30912
<b>Rural</b>	97238	2193	16556	13936
<b>Urban</b>	24407	1152	4970	5029

**Source:** The Census of India 2011 (Provisional), table D-5.

### **3.5.4. Migration in Present Sikkim**

The definition of internal migration is 'population movement across a political or administrative boundary, which entails a change of usual residence' (Bilsborrow, 1998: 1-531). Kothari explained three dimensions for the reasons to migrate, which include different motives, geographical aspects, and time (Kothari, 2002). The perception of internal migration mostly depends on the supply and demand of labour. Internal migration at micro level studies creates a relationship between total

migration flows with the presence of spatial heterogeneity within the various geographic locations. Migration always acts as a spatial phenomenon, and hence while discussing this act we should always consider at least two regions.

In tune with the wide variety of the study of migration, the present study on Singtam and Rangpo town scenario attempts to explore the question of why people migrate and how far they move. The former equates the “pull-push” hypothesis (Herberfeld, Menaria, Sahoo and Vyas 1999: 473-489) and the latter has been explained through different models with statistical analysis to explain the internal migration. It has been observed that the possible benefits of internal migration are not being fully recognised because of insufficient evidence of migration patterns, mostly temporary, seasonal and circular migration, different policy barriers to population movement and social exclusion (Deshingkar, 2008: 612-28). On the one hand, while people are moving permanently out from rural to urban areas, on the other, a growing number of provisional or circulatory migrants between the same is experienced (Haan, Brock, and Coulibaly. 2002: 37-58). In India this scenario is also predominant (Srivastava and Sasikumar 2005: 31-55). Rural-urban migration essentially drives the ‘spatial concomitant of the economic development’ (Mabogunje 1970: 1-18) in Singtam and Rangpo town as a case that seems to reverse the dynamic of population from major agricultural based economy in rural areas to less non-agricultural activities in urban areas (Lewis, 1954: 139-191), nevertheless having the status of quasi-permanent casual workers, devoid of civic amenities. According to NSS 64<sup>th</sup> round (July 2007-2008) Sikkim’s inter-state migration is significant. The following table shows the significant number of migrants; whose last usual place of residence was in other states. NSS Report states that Sikkim experiences large number of migrants due to reasons of employment, [570 rural males, 589 urban males per 1000] (NSS.64<sup>th</sup> Round. 2007-2008) and movement of parent or earning member (214 rural males, 286 urban males) respectively.

Table no. 3.5

**Distribution (per 1000) of Migrants by Location of****Last Usual Place of Residence**

State	Last usual place of residence (Other State)	
	Rural areas	Urban areas
Sikkim		
Rural male	199	42
Rural female	140	19
Urban male	219	356
Urban female	102	226

**Source:** NSS Report No. 533: Migration in India: July, 2007- June, 2008.

Table no. 3.5 also shows that Sikkim is experiencing high rate of migration in case of urban male migrants which justifies the fact that Sikkim's in-migration totally depends on the job market of the state. In any stream of migration, the importance of transport and communication cannot be ignored (Greenwood, 2005). The gradual transformation of the society from 'field to factory' (Bremner, 1996) creates massive displacement of the identically identified group of people named 'labour'. In Sikkim this transitional span was prolonged due its monarchy based feudal system. Moreover, local Lepchas and Bhutias were not involved in working in the public sectors, and this created a large demand for migrant labourers.

Table no. 3.6

**Migration Details of Sikkim (1999-2000 and 2001)**

Migration Details	No. of
In migrants (other states)	22,519
Out migrants (from Sikkim)	6238
In migrants ( other countries)	7655
Net in migrants	23,936
Migration rate (per 100)	5.9%
Temporary & seasonal Migrants (in	7.1
Temporary & seasonal migration rate	16.6%

**Source:** Census of India 2001, Data Highlight Table- D2, and 55<sup>th</sup>NSS. 1999-200. Unit Level Data.

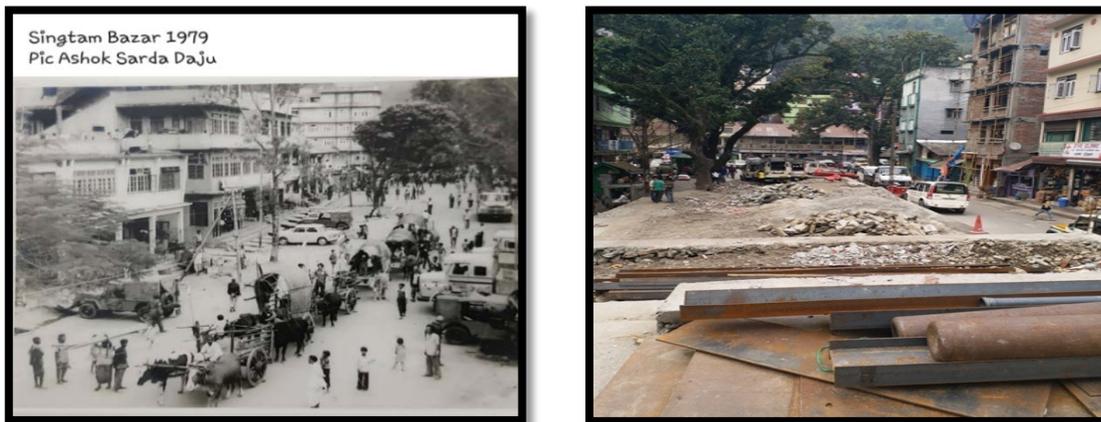
Initially migrant Nepali labourers were satisfying that demand. Afterwards people from other parts of India also penetrated into industrial sectors of Sikkim. Most of the registered industrial units were concentrated in the East district of the state. There was a high absorption of industrial establishment in certain geographical positions like - Singtam and Rangpo towns. Sikkim is a politically stable and peaceful state. The state does not suffer any labour-related and insurgency-related problem either. Industrialists like to establish their units in this state because of few deliberate reasons in terms of raw materials, market and labour. Another landmark is the inclusion of Sikkim in the North Eastern Council; it triggers off the maximum growth in the industrial sector in Sikkim. Today Sikkim is regarded as the pioneer in the realm of investor friendly states.

### **3.6 Neo-Liberal Urbanisation and Labour Migration in Rangpo and Singtam Town**

Urban development is a rapid and continuous concentration of modernism-structuralism and socio-cultural changes. It has been identified as a major factor in economic transformation from breakdown of the feudal system to modern liberal system. Urbanisation took off speedily due to the process of rural urban migration. Riesman (1964) opines that urbanisation is an overall process, when the society transforms from one economic structure to another – feudal to industrial and from homogenous to mass heterogeneous. Different urban developments with a high degree of migration rate (Davis & Golden, 1954: 6-26; Johnston, & Mellor .1961:566-593; Massey. 1988:383-413) have also been witnessed.

Compared to other states in the history of Indian urbanisation, Sikkim's is of a recent origin. It can fairly be traced with the emergence of Gangtok as a town in 1951. In 1971, the number of towns has increased to seven as 'Notified Bazar Committees'. Since 1981 (eight towns) the urban population has started increasing gradually.

Fig no. 3.4 **Transformation of Singtam Bazar Area Since 1979 to 2017**



Singtam Bazar in 1979 (Source: Ashok Sarda, Sikkim Cronicle) Singtam Bazar in 2017 (Source: Author)

One important feature of Sikkim's urbanisation is that it is not the staple case of the Sikkimese people migrating from rural to urban areas. The newly-born towns have received massive number of migrants making them thereby not only populous towns, but also changing the demographic and economic composition of the state as a whole. Most of the migrants come from neighbouring states like Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa etc. Migration-urbanization relation was consolidated after Sikkim's merger with the Indian Union. The Census of India (2001, series D table) mentioned that the net migration rate in Sikkim (1991-2001) was +0.21(Census of India.2001). Sikkim recorded high in-migration. Migration is predominantly a male dominated concept [net migrant rate '91-'01 for male is +0.26] (*ibid*), and usually of short term or seasonal/temporary in nature and directed towards job opportunities available in Sikkim's fledgling informal economy. Post-merger urbanisation trend in Sikkim is justly dependent on outside state migration flow. This dependency has received further acceleration because of adopting neoliberal governance pattern in the overall Indian body politic.

Researchers have identified that structural reform and corresponding developmental strategies are expected to not only create high economic growth, but also to accelerate the pace of urbanisation (Bhagat, 2004: 47-60 and Kundu, 2003: 3079-3987).

Table no. 3.7 **Total Urban Population in Different Towns in Sikkim**

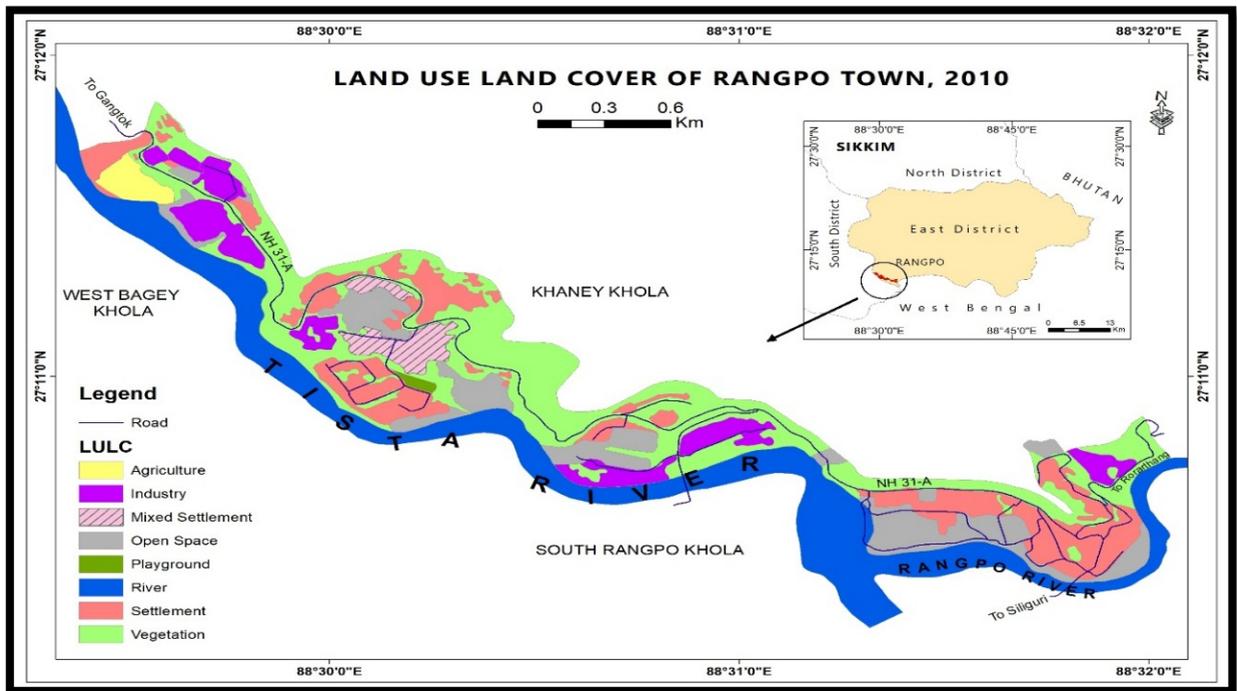
**(1981 – 2011)**

<b>Towns</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Gangtok</b>	36747	25024	29359	98658
<b>Singtam</b>	4043	3868	5432	5874
<b>Rangpo</b>	2452	2980	3709	10326
<b>Mangan</b>	780	803	1248	4644
<b>Jorthang</b>	3921	1939	2967	8895
<b>Namchi</b>	1444	630	979	12194
<b>Nayabazar</b>	952	1045	996	1230
<b>Gayzing</b>	745	717	828	4009

**Source:** District Census Handbook, 1981, 1991 and Census of India 2001 & 2011.

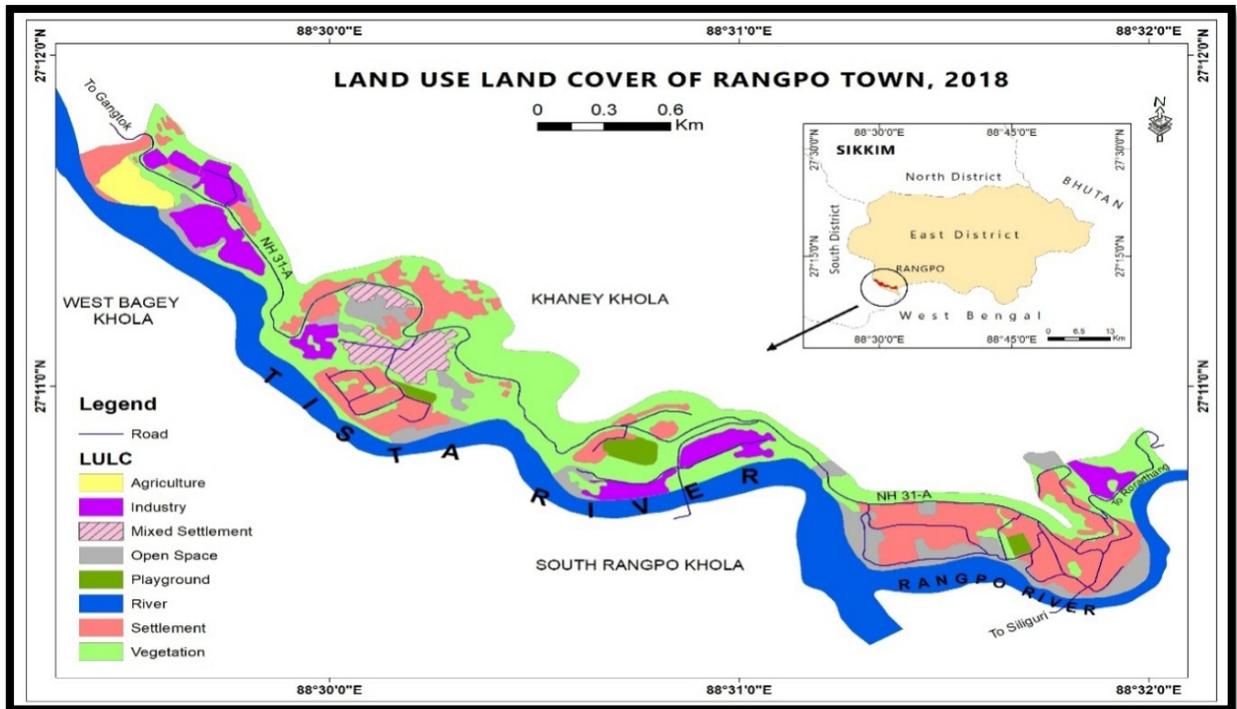
Having functional equality with all India trend, post-reform Sikkim is marked by a noticeable slow growth of formal sector employment, together with a consistent development in the capacity of informal sectors to absorb migrants as a self-employed worker, as informal employer, or as casual labourers. The common attributes of neoliberal urbanisation are governed by the introduction of new policy regimes, which ensure reduction of public sector involvement, and appropriate prices for infrastructural development and urban amenities through reduction or elimination of subsidies, popularisation of legislative system in order to introduce proper land use parameters and value based location of economic activities etc. These factors are advocated as package, heralding a new system of urban governance (Dutta, A. 1999). Sectoral allocation of expenditure to the total development in 11<sup>th</sup> five-year plan 2007-2012 also claims the aforementioned facts. Sikkim assigns maximum amount on social services (28.51%), transport (8.28%) and in energy (7.74%) (Planning Commission, Government of India, Inclusive growth, Vol.1).

Fig no. 3.5



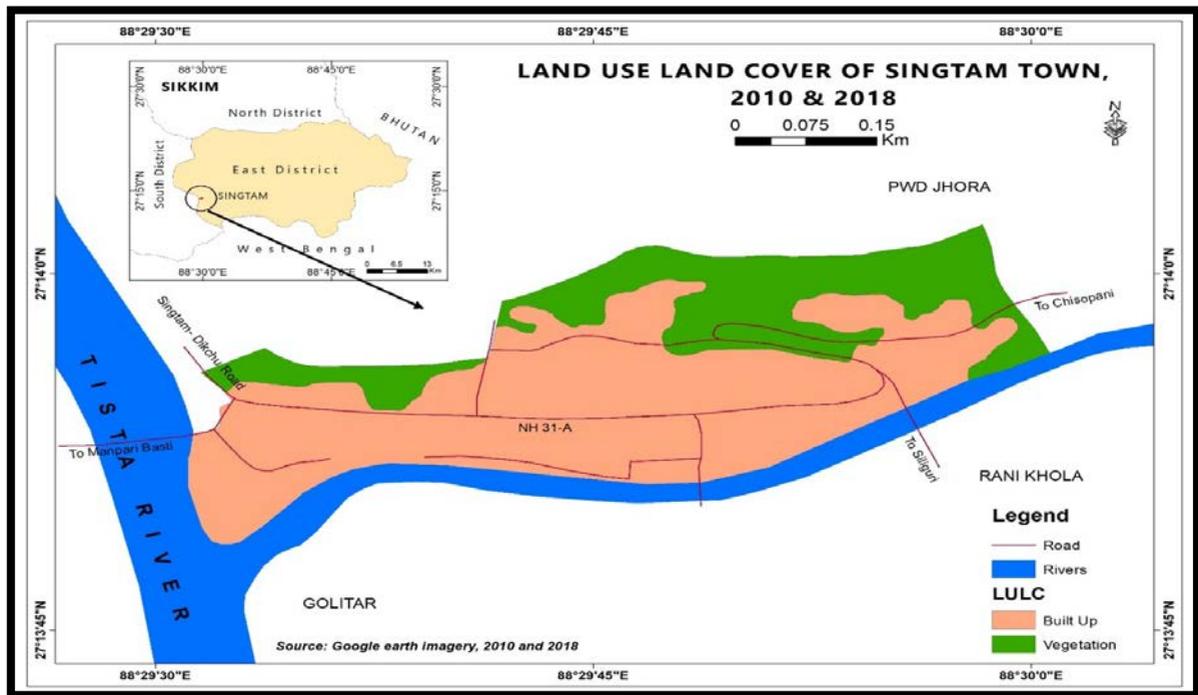
Source: Google Earth Imagery (prepared by author using software arc GIS desktop).

Fig. no. 3.6



Source: Google Earth Imagery (prepared by author using software arc GIS desktop).

Fig. no. 3.7



Source: Google Earth Imagery (prepared by author using software arc GIS desktop).

All these three maps (figure number 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7) represent the present land use land cover. In case of Rangpo it has been clearly identified that settlement area has increased during 2010 to 2018 in ward nos.3, 4 and 5 - Mandibazar, Upper Rangpo Bazar, and Chanatar respectively. Industrial land cover has also increased, mostly in ward no. 2, namely, Mining IBM. Rangpo land use map also carries the sign of accelerated urbanisation through the reduction of open space and increase of settlement and industrial sectors. These developments are creating demand based employment opportunities as well as attracting labourers from beyond the state boundary. According to Nagar Panchayat Office, ward no.1 (Mazitar) has nearly 12 different types of industries, e.g. Mount distilleries, V. Gard stabilizer, Titan (parts), Pharmaceuticals etc. Different other industries are also under construction. In Rangpo there are two ongoing construction works proposed by Central Government. One is the proposed railway lines to connect Rangpo (Sikkim) and West Bengal. The work of portal one and construction of the railways tracks (under Abir infrastructure Pvt. Ltd.) have already started in Rangpo. Another roadway bridge under Central Government Project (NHIDCL) is also being constructed at ward no 2, undertaken by Dinesh Chandra R Agarwal Infracon Pvt. Ltd. (DRAIPL). These developmental works generate the capacity of urban areas to produce job markets and to discriminate between economic sectors – informal and formal. Singtam, a junction

town is mostly engaged in retail and wholesale business with a large market area. According to Nagar Panchayat Office, under NBCC (National Buildings Construction Corporation Limited) there is a project of a huge construction to build a multistoried market area, viz. Lal Bazar at ward no. 5 (Chisopani). Another UNDP programme to construct a flyover is also going on. I have deliberately chosen Rangpo and Singtam, two most important towns in East Sikkim in terms of commercial interests and economic aspirations. The neoliberal urbanisation encapsulates the modern capitalism accompanied by commodification of land. The land use land cover maps of these two towns corroborate this global truth.

A decisive aspect of Sikkim's neoliberal urbanisation is marked by its turn towards transforming its urban spaces into logistical hubs with due emphasis on Urban Development Projects (UDPs) [in case of Sikkim the UDPs form a part of larger North East Regional Urban Development Projects (NERUDP) programme executed by the North Eastern Council (NEC)]. Such indications are prominent in the Sikkim Industrial Promotion and Incentive Act, 2000, that has identified thrust sectors such as precision engineering and IT, food and fruit processing, horticulture, floriculture, tourism, honey and biotechnology. While availability of infrastructure in the state is poor, construction activity has picked up in the last few years and the Government is focusing on development of roads, railway, hydroelectric power plants and telecom infrastructure (NSDC 2012: 30). In its transforming into UDP epicenters, the urban space itself becomes a site of extraction and thereby a rental site that survives on extracting all conceivable resources including labour. The postcolonial milieu of this double transformation makes the contradictions between the urban policy regime and neoliberal urbanity more acute as a whole. These contradictions revolve around two crucial issues: (a) the relation between labour and urban space in this transformation, and (b) the transformation of the city into a rental outlet, based on localised concentrations of migrant labour, a complex of place-based services to support the logistical economy, and a maddening rush for extraction (Ghosh 2017: 1). The migrant labour stands at the centre of these relations. While I agree that large-scale UDPs/ UIPs have indeed become one of the most visible and ubiquitous urban revitalisation strategies pursued by the stakeholders of Sikkim's urban governance in search of economic growth and competitiveness, I also argue that it is exactly this sort of new urban policy that actively produces, enacts, embodies, and reshapes the new political and economic regimes operative at local and regional context of Sikkim within which the vulnerability and precariousness of the migrant labourers are to be sought.

Inter-state migration in Singtam and Rangpo can be viewed as a microcosm of ‘assumed acceleration of global migration’, not only in terms of states of origin but also in terms of migration categories, and attributes to their skills. The demand for labour and provision of employment prospects in the economy is truly determined by the economic growth potential in Sikkim labour market. Sikkim Human Development Report, 2001 and 2014 stated that Sikkim has experienced an exceptional increase in average GSDP rate (13.9%). An inspiring growth in incomes in the state over the past decade has contributed to the increase in HDI. Sikkim’s NSDP grew, on an average, by 17% every year, which is the highest among all Indian states. As a result of high growth in overall economic indicators, real per capita income has also increased more than four times from Rs 15,953 in 2001–02 to Rs 69,202 in 2011–12. Sikkim’s per capita income today is the highest among north-eastern states and ranks fifth in India (after Delhi, Goa, Chandigarh and Puducherry). Maximum growth has been generated by impressive expansion in the industrial and manufacturing sectors, backed by the services sector. The Sikkim Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Limited (SIDICO) is the state level institution engaged in promoting, financing, and developing the small and tiny scale industries. All these factors, in general, are attracting migrants from the neighbouring plain areas – to establish the fact that net migration rate of Sikkim was +0.21% and percentage of migration in the total population was 34.6 (Census 2001 and SSES 2006). Among four districts, East district contains 65.02% of migrant population (SSEC, 2006). This district is especially experiencing the influx of the migrant population because of the presence of state led development initiatives and the best ever growing economic development, infrastructural development as compared to other districts. The proportions of migrant youths (36.74%) are higher than that of the state (34.8%) itself. Furthermore, the presence of 53.41% migrants between 15 to 44 age groups also shows that the young working population is dominated by the migrant labour force. Perhaps the labour market of the entire economy of the state has been controlled by the migrant labour but there is a sharp contrast in the rights of equality in terms of socio-political rights of the migrant workers.

### **3.7 Labour Migration and Informality**

All those activities which build up through work and employment fall under informal economy. These employments are not enlisted and administrated by any public regulation. The informality concept owes its origin/growth to K. Hart’s pioneering work in the 1960s. Informal economy is not a pure product of capitalism rather it exists as traditional *bazaar* economy in agrarian and rural India to provide livelihood more or less of the entire workforce (Breman. 2013). The journey from

agrarian society to industrial society – from feudalism to capitalism – influences the labour mobility. This transition also gives a big spatial radius to the labour for migration, though the classic Lewi's approach of migration is not considered a smooth transfer of labourers from the agriculture to industry in India. At the time of agrarian society/pre-colonial society in India, it was not possible to differentiate labour from the total work force because an 'individual's labour activities are pre-determined by the culture' (David L. Sius, 1968). Breman (1996) also stated that the transition towards the industrial production was not as aerodynamic as the positive views. He named this sector as an 'absorptive reservoir and clearing house for raw labour, undisciplined and untrained, coming from countryside'. The framework proposed by Harris-Todaro (1970: 126-142) provides some imminent connection between informality and urbanisation. Long time back the Dutch anthropologist Julius H. Boeke (1947, 1953) also envisioned two separate domains of activities, one was under the jurisdiction of the colonial law and other one was outside these rules and regulations (Kanbur, R, Ghani, E. 2013). However, labour migration has become noticeable from the beginning of industrial age. India did not experience the common starting point and growth of capitalism. Primitive accumulation implies a group of people with no land or very less land to survive. This process increasingly makes people wage-earners. It also generates waves of rural people migrating to urban areas for the sake of jobs leaving behind their conventional occupations.

The urbanisation in developing world has a distinct feature – it consists of the evaluation of large informal sector. ILO, 2007 identified several underlying factors for this - poverty and livelihood opportunities, increasing flexible labour market, less absorbing power in formal sector etc. Different studies have indicated that there is a close relation between migration and urban informality (Bannerjee, 1983 and Sethuraman, 1992). The growth of informal sector along with the pace of migration is inevitable because this sector acts as a job generator and absorbs newcomers in new jobs offered by capitalisation, modernisation and liberalisation of economy.

It has been already discussed the impact of neoliberal urbanisation and economic structure on the growth of informal economy in Sikkim.

My field surveys reveal the fact that Rangpo has been experiencing a sudden growth of informal economy since last decade due its developmental initiations (NULM, UDPS and others), sites for various industries, hotel businesses, and so on. Correspondingly, Singtam has also been

experiencing substantial development of retail and wholesale businesses, infrastructural developments etc. These overall neoliberal developments and wage structure are always attracting labour from outside the state. As Gary Field (1975) extended the concept of Harris-Todaro towards urban informal employment, in Sikkim, it has been also observed that urban informal employment is characterised as ‘underemployment’ and also as a substitute to open unemployment for rural migrant people due to ‘easy entry’.

### **3.8 Who are the Urban Informal Labourers in Rangpo and Singtam Town?**

The text book theories on economic progress are always envisioned through transformation of labour from a feudalistic to modern economy. In the contemporary era, the developing countries are undergoing an enormous and quick growth of informal sectors outside agriculture. There is an ongoing debate on the participation rate of informal labourers on the assistance of economic growth. Informal labourers consist of nearly 92% of the total India’s labour force [National Commission for Enterprises in The Unorganised Sector, Govt. of India (2004-05)]. High commodification of land and social flaws of global capitalism also create a marginalised group, especially in informal economy. Normally, migrants enter a new town/city through informal sector with an informal and precarious life style. Buoyancy in the Indian economy has created a sense of euphoria, which is not coexistent with India’s informal economy (National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganised Sector/NCEUS, 2004-05: 1). In Global South, work is the only identity for social recognition and allows individuals to locate their positions within the corresponding social structure. Due to the intensified global competition, technological revolution and flexibility of employment, entire work process has changed.

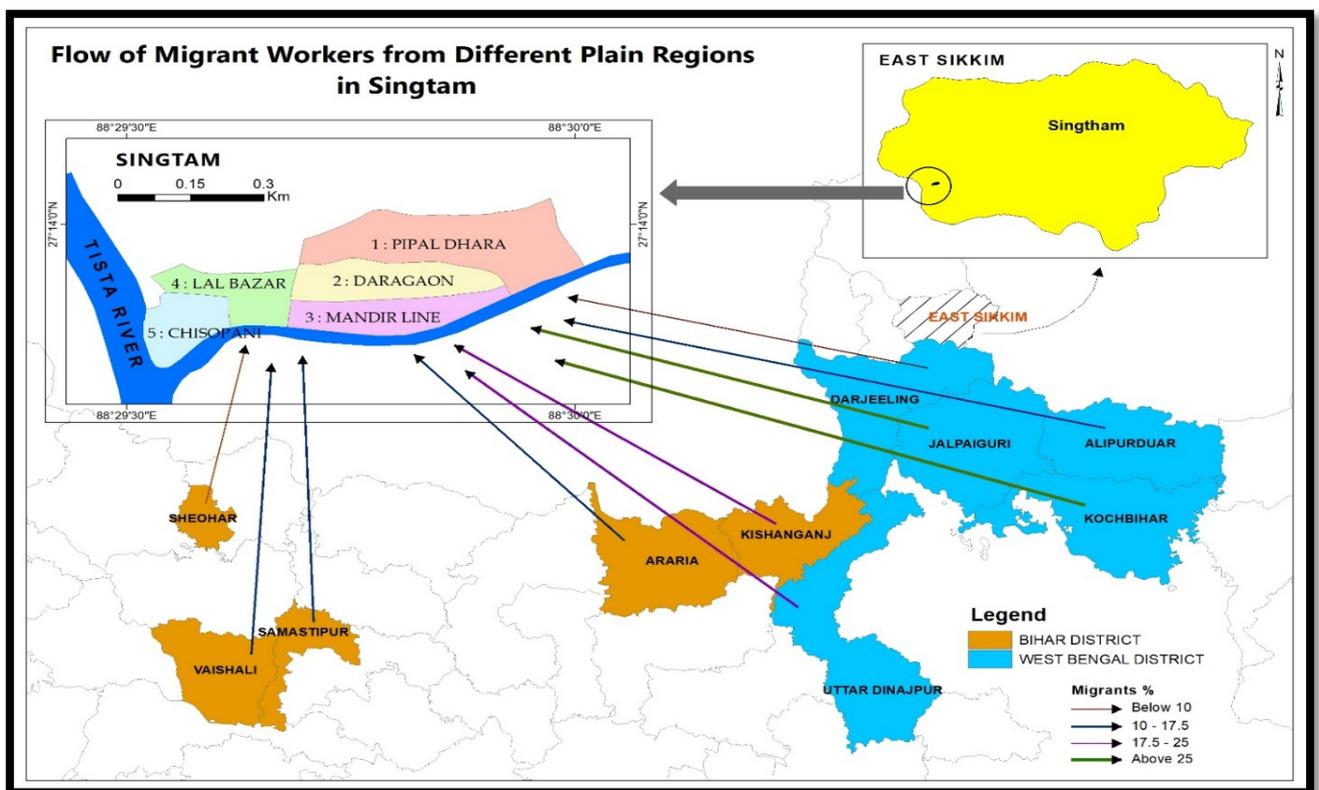
These processes caused the significant growth of precarious work mostly in the last few decades. There are different drivers of precarious work, especially ‘low-road’<sup>12</sup> (Evans and Gibb. 2009) concepts lead to achieve the cost-cutting perceptions at the cost of job quality, working environment and wages. The upsurge of informal sector specifies the heterogeneity of labour market. It is important to observe that all these symptoms hold true for Rangpo and Singtam too. Spatial location promotes the growth of significant scopes for migrant labourers in these two newly born towns. Migrants, mostly from rural West Bengal and Bihar adapt themselves, as a pro-urban poor in Rangpo and Singtam town. According to my cross sectional random survey, in Rangpo

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<sup>12</sup>Low-road ‘is a term used throughout the employment literature. Low road is represented as ‘low-skill, low-pay job which are unsafe, insecure and unsatisfying in marginally profitable industries’ – used in the conference “21<sup>st</sup> century work: High road or Low road?”

town, 73% of the respondents belongs to West Bengal and 27% is from different districts of Bihar. In the same way, Singtam town has an accumulation of 64.57% of the informal labourers from West Bengal and 35.43% from Bihar. Income of the majority of these migrant labourers is irregular and uncertain, but the amount of money they are earning here is much higher than what they could have earned at their native places, albeit at the cost of high exploitation rate. Especially, due to the stalling of rural agricultural economy people have started to migrate (slender season of agricultural activities) from their native places to distant or nearby urban areas for employment in different informal sectors, such as constructions, that of domestic helps, vendors, waiters and labourers in small hotels (Breman, 1994; Deshinkar and Farrington, 2009a; Haberfeld et al. 1999 and Vijay, 2005).

Fig.no. 3.8



Source: Field Survey. 2016-17. [N= 175 (Singtam)].

Table number 3.8. shows that maximum number of labourers in both the towns are from the West Bengal. 44.24% of the labourer comes from Coochbehar district and cross a distance of 269.2 km. to work in different informal sectors in Singtam town, followed by Jalpaiguri with a percentage of

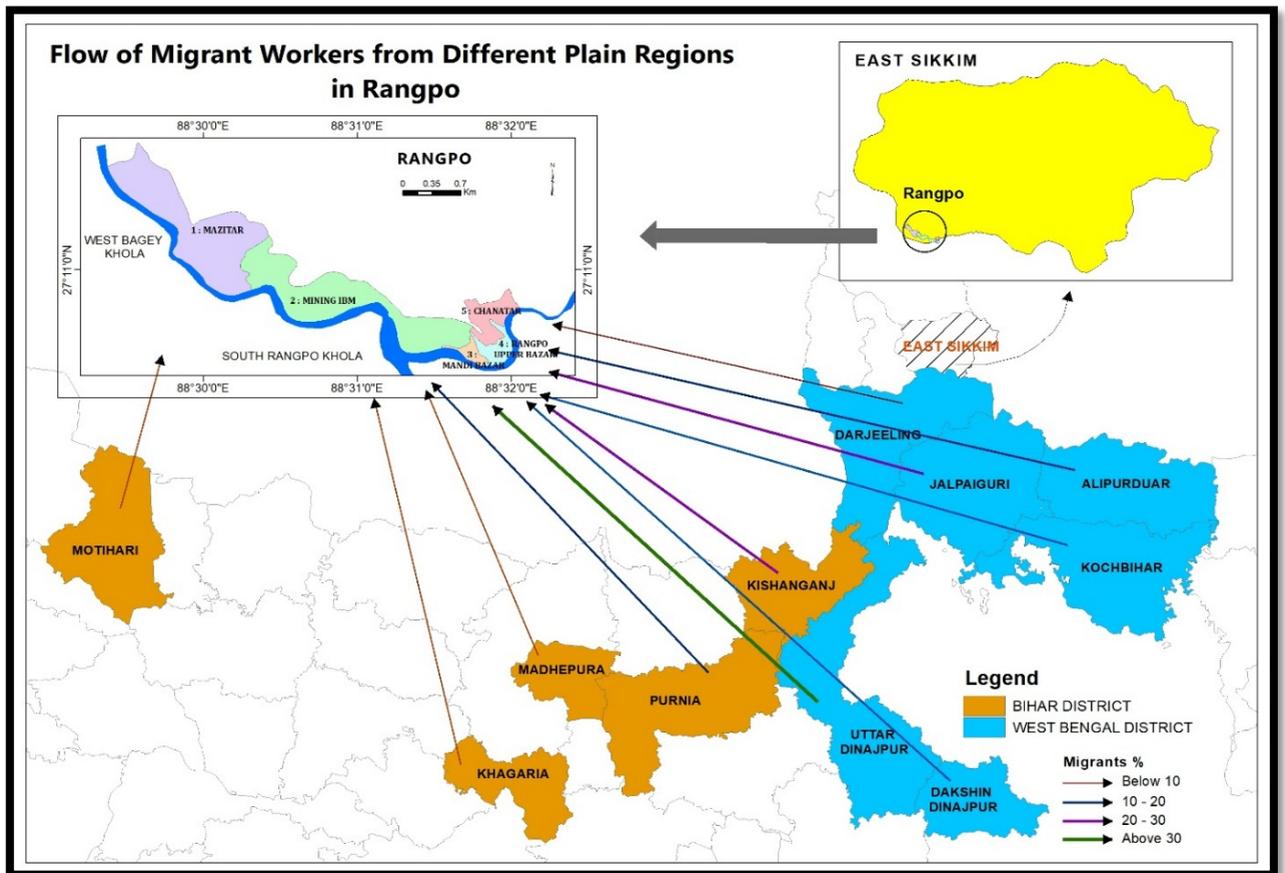
23.9%. Rangpo town has an accumulation of the highest number of labourers (42.18%) from North Dinajpur, followed by those from Jalpaiguri District. The labour flow from Kisanganj district is high (29.03% in Singtam and 59.57% in Rangpo town) among the districts of Bihar. We know that migration unfolds in space and time ( Malmberg 1997: 21-48) and is also defined against various thresholds of distance and ‘time in migration’ (Cwerner 2001: 7-36). However, in Sikkim’s informal structure most of the labourers cross a maximum of 269.2 km to a minimum of 145.4 km. for either continuing the same occupation or for starting a different one. Migration is a spatio-temporal process that evolves over space and time. It involves the continual reshaping of place as people move between various origins and destinations, and inversely related to distance is the habitual movement of people or groups from one geographic location to another for various reasons ranging from job opportunities to mental persecution (Hagen-Zanker, 2010), but there are considerable conceptual snags that are unacknowledged in migration literature, and workers’ mobilities take various dimensions, which may coexist. The geographic distance is often not a powerful enough barrier for labour migration in the contemporary world when the migration risk factors are also declining.

Table no. 3.8 **Flow of Migrant Labourers from Various Neighbouring States to Singtam and Rangpo Town, Sikkim.**

Sl.No	WEST BENGAL			BIHAR		
	DISTRICT	Singtam	Rangpo	DISTRICT	Singtam	Rangpo
1.	Jalpaiguri	27	21	Kisanganj	18	28
2.	Alipurduar	14	14	Vaishali	12	0
3.	Coochbehar	50	16	Sheohar	09	0
4.	North Dinajpur	20	54	Araria	11	0
5.	Darjeeling	02	04	Samastipur	12	0
6.	South Dinajpur	0	19	Madhupura	0	03
7.	-	-	-	Khagaria	0	02
8.	-	-	-	Motihari	0	02
9.	-	-	-	Purnia	0	12

Source: Field Survey 2016-2017

Fig no. 3.9



Source: Field Survey, 2016 & 2017. [N=175 (Rangpo)].

### 3.9 Reasons for the Migration in Rangpo and Singtam Town

Migration, from its recent past has been recognised as one of the major rudiments of the strategic households to secure and possibly improve their livelihoods. It is sometimes also combined with agricultural escalation and local non-farm or industrial activities (McDowell and Haan, 1997; Bebbington, 1999: 2021-2044; Ellis, 2000). Human capital theory states the fact that labour market is the product of the combination of what that particular individual/migrant performs in that destination’s labour market. The price of their labour may be the skills, physical abilities or other concerning choices of mixed jobs. On the contrary, there are other controlling variables beyond migrant’s skills and physical abilities, such as age, state policies, ethnic background etc.; these act as changing variables of the human capital perceptions through offering new job status in the host area. It has been also recognised that migration is mostly a short term survival approach by rural people, who are also made to suffer by the global capitalist system and are forced to join the newly

born proletariat group. My study argues that migration is a deliberate decision for improving livelihoods, empowerment for future investments (Bebbington, 1999:2027), and also for securing future uncertainty (De Haan et al., 2000:28; McDowell and De Haan, 1997:18). However, these facts and findings are predominantly valid for rural to urban human resource flow within the national boundaries. In this context, it is also important that “there is no *a priori* reason why this diversification-through-migration argument cannot also be extended to international migration and urban households” (Hass de Hein, 2010:245). New economics of labour migration exist analogously with ‘livelihood approaches’, which tend to be heterogeneous in character. These thinking have evolved since the late ’70s among geographers, sociologists and anthropologists, which lead them to pursue micro-research in the developing countries. Diverse and contradictory observations are being evolved through the empirical micro research studies – those do not fit the neo-Marxist thinking (*ibid*: 227-264). Still, it is obvious that migration and economic activities of the origin place are not equally exclusive but are often combined.

One of the major reasons for in-migration observed in Sikkim is the high wages that will be discussed in the upcoming chapter in greater detail. Due to the ready availability of labour, migrants would be able to increase their income through moving or working in high paid locations. Manjula Luthria (2008: 165-170) nicely correlates the population movement towards labour intensive economy/(neoliberal) and high wage location and states that “...under certain conditions the free movement of goods is a substitute for the free movement of the factors embodied in the production of those goods – therefore, trade in goods that are highly labour intensive should do the same for wages as a physical movement of people...” (Luthria, 2008:165). My empirical study shows that (table no.4.12) most respondents migrate in search of better employment in terms of income, e.g. in Rangpo 43.97% and Singtam 52.43%, and 39.16%, 33.53% in search of any employment in Rangpo and Singtam respectively.

Most of the labourers have come from the plain topographic terrain of West Bengal and Bihar. Migrants come to Singtam and Rangpo town to garner major shares of informal employment in construction sectors, tailoring, hotel work and other daily wage based economy like portering because the area has been a migrant receiving area since the time of the Chogyals. If the destination of the migrants has already been facing worker storages, this makes the condition more favorable for the mutually useful movement of labourers. The key to this situation is the nonchalant attitude

of local youths in this field, creating openings for migrants from other states (Wright and Ellis 1996, 1997); in this case, mostly from Bihar and West Bengal.

It has been noticed that these migrants preferred to develop their present livelihood situation, and information and supportive networks facilitated the migrants to take hold of the risk of migration. Reduced migration cost also motivated them to take part in this migration current towards Sikkim. The most relevant work in the present time is to execute the relationships between regional and economic restructuring and in-migration receptiveness of labourers towards cities and also to small towns, and the aptitude of these labourers to efficiently distinguish the 'true-false' situation of labour market and to think about potential destinations (Clark and Ballard, 1981). Hence, this theory regarded migration as a household livelihood strategy. The livelihood approach encompasses entire social and economic perspective of the households and individuals. It can be defined as a strategic choice of the individuals or households to improve and secure their life through heterogeneous activities. Inductive or empirical studies of the respondent can establish the emergence of the livelihood concept. In this context, I tried to find out respondent's income generating activities along with their social institutions, intra personal relationship and the mechanisms for the improvement of their life – under the light of inter-state migration and status of occupation.

Table number 3.9 shows that participation rate as informal employer is very low compared to informal employee. It is also varying among the different informal occupations. Rangpo and Singtam have experienced maximum number of informal employer in tailoring profession (18.75% and 41.18% in Rangpo and Singtam respectively) and Singtam has very low percentage of informal employer in construction sector (3.08%). Construction industry is playing an important role in the development of infrastructure and juxtaposes neoliberal urban trends. Nearly 340 million workforces are engaged in unorganised/informal sector and half of them are from construction industry (NCEUS, 2005; Ramesh, 2009: 1-18; Rajasekhar et al., 2009). This industry is the fastest growing sector with an annual growth rate of 10% (Baruah, 2008: 1-24). Informality has become a norm in construction industry throughout the developing South. Sikkim is also witnessing this fastest growing sector.

Table no. 3.9 **Participation Rate of Migrants in Sikkim’s Informal Economy**

Towns	Informal employer				Informal employee			
	Tailor	Porter	Hotel Worker	Construction Worker	Tailor	Porter	Hotel Worker	Construction Worker
<b>Rangpo</b>	3(18.75)	0	0	0	13(81.25)	62(100)	30(100)	67(100)
<b>Singtam</b>	7(41.18)	0	0	2(3.08)	10(58.82)	65(100)	30(100)	63(96.92)

**Source:** Field Survey, 216-17. [% values are within ()].

In Rangpo town, every respondent – engaged in the construction industry is informal employee and in Singtam the participation rate is as high as 96.92% (table no. 3.9). Geographical location, economic practices and urban development practices of these towns are determining the evolution of different informal sectors, where I have noticed tailor, porter, construction work and hotel work have utmost space to consume migrant labour.

The table no. 3.10 shows different reasons or perceptions of labour in Rangpo’s and Singtam’s informal labour market in Sikkim. Search of better employment is the dominating practice for migration in both of the towns (43.97% and 52.43% in Rangpo and Singtam respectively). Second leading reason is search of any employment which established the fact that the growth of informal sector is high in these two towns. Urban informality is the well-established trend of contemporary neoliberal economic practices and Sikkim is experiencing this in terms of infrastructural development, city development, various urban developmental projects, etc. My field survey has also explored another area of concern, which is related to the proximity to place of work – one that acts as an important reason for selection of these towns in Sikkim (Table no. 3.10). There are various suggestions in the literatures to identify the increasing tendency to choose nearby working place (Greenwood, 1997). The foremost explanation considers the distance as a proxy for the transportation costs for moving and high costs also act as ‘intervening opportunities’ (Lee, E. 1940). Psychic costs of separation from the family and home at times play a significant role to choose the close-by working place. Information for the beneficial shorter move by prior migrants also turns as a motivation. Migration and distance are hence related with three contexts. Primarily, when frequent return visits are envisioned by a migrant, which may well be the case when the migrant wishes to endure a close link with their family left behind at the place of origin. Secondly,

the costs of single domestic journeys may be less than the price of distance travel and lastly, for poor households, that are credit constrained, the ability to raise funds to pay the costs of moving before gaining higher earning in their new destination may be a constraint.

Table no.3.10 **Different Reasons for Migration in Rangpo and Singtam Town**

Reasons for Migration	Rangpo	Singtam
In search of employment	65 (39.16%)	55 (33.53%)
In search of better employment	73 (43.97%)	86 (52.43%)
Proximity to place of work	24 (14.46%)	17 (10.36%)
Others	04 (2.40%)	06 (3.65%)
Not responded	09 (5.14%)	11 6.28%)

Source: Field Survey, 2016-2017 (total no. of respondents: Rangpo - 166 and Singtam - 164).

### **3.10 Labour Migration as a Result of Demographic Disparities or Lack of Human Resource**

An important insight gained into labour migration is the fact of demographic disparities between host and the sending regions. Natural growth rates of sending regions are probably higher than the receiving areas and this demographic pattern of growth and slow-down is the driving force of labour migration. Most of the international movement of people between Global North and Global South is because of this reason. Demographic disparity deploys the concept of neo-Malthusian approach (Sturman, 1989:135-152) in population growth in the developing countries. Sikkim has total fertility rate of 2.4 birth/woman, (2015) compared to and Bihar (4.5 birth/woman, 2015). We also know that there is reciprocity in the relationship between migration and geographic population distribution, which facilitates the pattern of urban informal labour flow in towns and cities. Labourers are shifted from low wage areas (Bihar and West Bengal) to high wage (Sikkim) areas and labour-surplus source regions to labour-scarce destination areas. Due to the structural transformation of an area, labour market has created a space for extra labourers in the low profile job market and Sikkim does not have enough hands to fill the vacuum place. So, in Sikkim, the demand of migrant labourers is always very high to execute ‘development’ practices. Another important feature of the development of Sikkim’s urban population is that it is not controlled by the rural Sikkimese migration to urban towns rather newly born towns have received maximum

number of migrants from the nearby states. So, urban population growth rate of Sikkim is chiefly determined by the non-Sikkimese population.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

The labour landscape (George and Sinha, 2018: 22) in Sikkim has changed through different subsequent industrial and infrastructural developments along with labour market deregulation policies. Different studies have already highlighted that structural and sectoral changes are the important parts for the expansion of informal sector (Nath 1994: 513-521; Gupta 1995; Maiti and Mitra 2010), decline of agriculture and allied sectors (Bhalla and Sing 2009:34-44; Rajkumar and Shetty 2015:108-110) and growth of certain section of service sectors (Rajkumar and Shetty 2015), and Sikkim is not beyond these changes. Most determinate factors of the labour space are the production processes, labour relations and strategic policies implemented by the state. These entire processes are decisive in the pattern, rate and the structure of migrant labour market in Rangpo and Singtam towns.

Most defining landscape of neoliberal regime is inequality, which has become the most relevant challenge for the state to maintain its accumulation proportion with the development. These structural changes are very much predominant in towns and cities. Neoliberalisation of urban space in the developing South is posited as a solution to poverty and other global developmental challenges, which may not be a generalised ideology of development. Liberalised migration in contemporary India has taken place because of the reason that towns and cities have been highly characterised by post capital production systems (non-agrarian production) and other specialised corporate functions to incite more migrant labour from the native rural areas. The perception of the informal economy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was considered as a vestigial part of the pre-modern mode of production, leading to a subsequent fading away against the dominance of hegemonic control of formal sector (Lewis, 1959; Geertz, 1963). This transformation has faced strong criticisms due to its strong relevance as a potential phenomenon in the vast regions of the globe (ILO, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b; OECD, 2012; Williams, 2014a). The emergence of political economy discourse on the informal economy has clearly transcended the previous dualistic depiction of the binary opposite of the formal/informal economics. It always puts informality forward as a component of capitalism and a part of deregulated national/transnational capitalism (Williams, 2017b). On the other hand, migrant gateways are extensions of transformation, which enforce vast volume of

migrant labour force swings between supply and demand areas and are consumed in elusive employment in the informal economy (Castells and Portes, 1989: 11-41; Gallin, 2001:531-549; Davis, 2006; Taiwo, 2013: 469-492), Internal trans-border migration is often believed to be a gradual transfer of rural labour force and utilization of its potentiality as a cheaper manpower for growing modern industrial complex (Todaro, 1980: 361-402).

This human resources transfer seems to be economically beneficial (Kuznets 1964; 1971) to overcome incessant crises and to fulfill daily needs of the migrant labourers. As the tune has followed by almost zero in the places of origin in order to maintain reasonably better livelihoods, which rapidly grows and results in the 'capital accumulation' in the new industrial sojourn. This accumulation of manpower generates incipient forms of blue collar jobs - those that are widely open in the city's nook and corner, where these migrants are gradually absorbed. The migration and job opportunities are inseparably intertwined in the developing world of Global South in particular. There is a significant paradox in Indian employment issue that the expansion of service sectors is higher without generating employment (George and Sinha, 2018: 20). My study shows that the manufacturing and construction collected nearly 24% of Indian workforce, especially in urban areas. Urban employment is selectively expanding and the highest share is contributed from the wholesale and retail sectors, constructions and also from repairing sectors. This uneven sectoral growth is considerably affecting the sustenance and expansion of informal employment in present economy. Urban migration is also presumed to generate the higher income processes from the hinterland areas, but the strategic role of this neo-liberal economy is to offer them informal services to survive their livelihoods. These growing informal economic activities are not able to expand without a competitive market in Sikkim. The state is experiencing huge growth in its GSDP and NSDP in the corresponding decades and accumulating 65.02% of the migrant population in East district (SSEC, 2006). NSSO 64<sup>th</sup> Round also reveals the facts that urban Sikkim comprised 76 migrant households per 1000 households during the last 365 days preceding the date of survey. Due to all these factors migration is essential but an invisible component in modern towns and cities, but in case of Sikkim, it has been noticed that entire economy is being controlled by the migrants, especially the informal sector. Saskia Sassen (2005: 27-43) has rightly stated that the city becomes global only with the presence of the migrant.

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