

PREFACE

As a valuable and feasible outcome of economic transformation, the migration issue has become universal phenomenon. Seven out of eight South Asian Countries (Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal are acknowledging as both migrant sending and receiving countries. History has witnessed that no society can claim to exist as an isolated social hole that defies flows of people from the outside. Migration is becoming a great 'global drama' in this contemporary time along with its various empirical realities. Structural and sectoral transformation and related courses of events in political economy increased the spatial mobility of individuals and group of people in relation to the demand and supply for labour in any fledging economy. In Indian economy, informal sector has occupied a pivotal part in terms of number of labourers and enterprises also. The matter of concern is that the discourses of informal economy and informality underscore the imbrications between 'everyday life' and 'way of life' for the unfortunate people being deported from the other sector of economy or as a first entry in this informal economy.

In case of Sikkim, migration seems to have been of crucial importance to secure state's informal sector workforce. Economic transformation that took place in the entire labour market of Sikkim's economy responded to the embedded pluralistic social fabric of migrant labour towards the ever expanding informal sector. This economic segment has inherent vulnerabilities and reliable data are needed for decision making and addressing the problem related in this sector. This thesis tries to develop informal sector statistics (micro level) to standardise different concepts and definitions, relation with migration and development processes with coverage and comparability over space and time. The labour space in India has experienced various changes succeeding to reforms in labour market policies in general and deregulation policies of labour market in particular. Over the years, Sikkim showed a precedence of integrating migrant labour over the local labour into the state's low road economy (i.e. the unorganised/ informal sector).

The purpose of this dissertation is to focus on the contemporary (post-merger) trends and patterns of labour migration in Sikkim to compare the conditions in informal labour market in East district as well as to understand the changing structural factors that have been caused for migration. It tries to better understand the nature of work environment and related vulnerabilities in this labour market and also associated causes for functional alternative livelihood changes. The movement of 'free proletariat' takes place mostly from rural areas to urban areas in high magnitudes with the

functional and structural development of urban space, as exemplified by Rangpo and Singtam town. It has gained further prominence after the adoption of neo-liberal urbanity in policy insights of the state (even in small new born small towns like Rangpo and Singtam) as a whole. Internal migration is often believed to be a gradual transfer of rural labour force to utilise their potentialities (especially brawn power) as a cheaper manpower in a growing modern capital economy. This human resource transfer seems to be economically beneficial and a process to overcome incessant crisis to fulfill daily needs and better livelihood options which are rapidly growing as a result of 'capital accumulation' in the new industrial sojourn. This thesis tries to examine the socio-economic structure of the respondents to comprehend the reality of migration and developmental nexus in micro level.

The thesis seeks to examine the migrant labour-space of urban informal sector with the help of various prospects and variabilities related with work environment in the host area. It investigates the relationship between informalised migrant labour in the light of actual existence of neoliberalism and work environment through the prism of locational and specific influences. It would be interesting to note migration has been highly politicised issues in Sikkim due to its special status in relation to the Union of India [Art. 371F and 371 F (κ)]. Within this special status 'non-Sikkimese' labour category has always been at the helm of a discriminatory politics played out against the large section of migrant labour who actually feed the burgeoning need of rapidly developing townships and city spaces of Sikkim. The thesis argues that policy regimes in Sikkim advocate various security options for the informal sector labour but in reality the efficacy of such measures is cut down to size by state endorsed market fundamentalism.

To overcome the unemployment and poverty in the native place and also to have better quality of life, non-Sikkimese migrants need to make certain compromise and most of the time these are related with their adaptation processes. This thesis also tries to focus on the processes of adaptation/adjustment in the new physical and socio-economic environment by the migrant labour. Different social encounters try to enrich the migrants about the similarities and discrepancies of their own culture (culture of native place) and with the host area. There is a continuous strategy building process to overcome 'cultural shock' and to survive in the host area. Ethnoscapes, technoscapes, ideascapes etc. are the production of the global migration circulation which are embedded in the acculturation studies and this study reveals the fact that Sikkimese are not xenophobic in nature but while talking about the inclusion process there is always one invisible

line based on geo-political space – migrants would not be allowed to cross the line. So, migrant labourers are more likely to adjust with the host area to economically survive rather than assimilate in the new society. The state of Sikkim wants to attract or retain investors from the neighbouring areas to be a part of cross state competition. Herein, Sikkim has to weaken the existing labour laws and this propensity may lead to fail in offering every labour rights, individual working conditions to the migrant low road labourers. Through a close observation of the spatio-temporal lattice of informal sector in Sikkim, this study reveals the fact that these economic sectors are fragile, with its maximum migrant human resource value chain by the state's policies. Absence of social protection and job security in Sikkim also witnessed that wage workers' informal micro employers live on a blur line between survival and failure. The upshot of this study is that migrant informal labourers are in critical situation to maintain their fundamental rights (security, union right, sustainable work environment etc.) and quality of life in the host area. These migrant labourers are always stigmatised and frequently invisible in policy decisions of the state Sikkim. It is the time Sikkim should reform labour policy, taking migrants as a part of it and assert the vibrancy of pluralistic and multicultural Sikkim in parity with other states of Indian territory.