

Chapter 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF POPULATION OF NEPAL AND
PROBLEMS OF MIGRATION TO AND FROM INDIA.

Nepal, one of the developing countries of Asia, has to face, in general terms, the problems of high population growth. With an average density of more than 100 persons per sq. kms. (in 1981) Nepal is one of the most populated mountain countries. The findings of demographic processes indicated that the CBR and the CDR reached 42 and 19 respectively in 1981/82 resulting in a rate of population growth of 25 per cent. Its population is three times then of Afganistan or Ethiopia and four times of Bhutan or Ecuador. The peculiar demographic transition of Nepal has its effect on the economic growth and output as well as been deteriorating the ecosystem of the country.

Although many Nepalese as well as foreign observers have been concerned with the growth of population of Nepal, there is enormous room for error and practically there are no truly reliable data prior to 1952/54 census of Nepal.

Growth of Nepalese Population : The earliest calculations of the population of Nepal were made in 1911. Though an estimate-cum-census of population was taken approximately every ten years, the censuses of 1911, 1920, 1930 and 1941 did not apply the modern techniques and can give only a rough estimate

of the population. On the basis of Harka Gurung's (1971) analysis of this early census data Mark Poffenberger has prepared a table - the "range" in which the actual population size of Nepal might lie. (Table 2.1)

Table 2.1

Population Estimates for Nepal : 1750-1971.

Census year	Total population as recorded in censuses.	Estimated range of population size.
1750	3,063,300 (estimate)	2.0 to 4.0 millions
1911	5,638,749	5.0 to 5.6 "
1920	5,573,738	5.5 to 5.8 "
1930	5,532,565	5.5 to 6.0 "
1941	6,283,649	6.2 to 7.0 "
1952/54	8,473,478	8.5 to 9.4 "
1961	9,739,820	9.8 to 10.8 "
1971	11,555,993	11.5 to 12.2 "

Though a fairly wide range of estimates in the above table is considered, "the accelerating growth pattern" is still very strong in Nepal. Again when we compare the pattern of growth in unpartitioned India with that of Nepal over the same time period, the similarities of the 'accelerating growth curve' (as Davis calls them, 1968) are striking.¹

The bulk of Nepal's population live in the hills and indicates a higher population concentration. The relative position of the three natural regions in terms of population may be seen from the following table (2.2). This, in turn, creates 'ecological collapse' as observed by Eke (1971).

Table 2.2

Population Estimate in Different
Regions of Nepal, 1968.

Geographical Region	No. of Population	Percentage
1. Mountain Districts	9, 22, 084	8.6
2. Hill Districts (including Kathmandu Valley)	60, 97, 650	56.8
3. Tarai Districts	37, 13, 606	34.5
1. Eastern Mountain	4, 38, 245	4.1
2. Central Mountain	63, 356	0.6
3. Western Mountain	4, 20, 283	3.9
4. Eastern Hill	19, 17, 934	17.8
5. Central Hill	22, 75, 973	21.2
6. Western Hill	14, 20, 605	13.2
7. Eastern Tarai	19, 51, 647	18.2
8. Central Tarai	12, 70, 959	11.9
9. Western Tarai	4, 91, 000	4.6
10. Kathmandu Valley	4, 83, 138	4.5
Total	1, 07, 33, 360	100.0

The Growth Process : From the above estimation of growth of population of Nepal it is found that during the period 1911 to 1961 the population of the country increased by 73.7 per cent and the progression was extremely irregular (Table 2.3 below). In fact, it is hard to attribute the large decline of population during 1911 to 1930 merely due to the Gurkha casualty during the First World War and the influenza epidemic of 1918. The explanation must be sought in either over-enumeration of the base year (1911) and underenumeration of the subsequent censuses or both. The first increase was observed in 1941 census, it showed an increase of 11.7 per cent over the 1930 census. The subsequent increase of 34.8 per cent during post-1941 decade was three times longer than that of the pre-1941 decade. But this erratic demographic pattern can not be supported by any contemporary social and economic factor in that country. The unusual increase during 1941-1952/54 became even more apparent when compared to with the more reliable figure for 1952/54-1961 period which showed only a percentile increase of 15.6 per cent. This increase in population was steady enough during the subsequent years, i.e., during the period 1961-72 (22.8 per cent) and 1971-81 (30 per cent).

Table 2.3Population Change in Nepal : 1911-1981.

Census Year	Total Population	Absolute Change	Percentile Change.
1911	5,638,739	-	-
1920	5,573,788	- 64,961	- 1.1
1930	5,532,564	- 41,224	- 0.7
1941	6,283,649	+751,085	+11.7
1952/54	8,473,478	+2,199,829	+34.8
1961	9,799,820	+1,326,342	+15.6
1911-1961	-	+4,373,441	+73.7
1971	11,555,983	+1,756,163	+22.8
1981	15,022,839	+3,466,856	+30.0

The absolute and percentile increases of population in the ten regions and their respective order are summarized in the following table.

Table 2.4Population Growth by Regions in Nepal : 1952-54 - 1961.

Region	Absolute increase	Percentile increase
Eastern Hills	177,906	10.0
Central Hills	192,379	10.9
Western Hills	181,309	11.2
Kathmandu Valley	48,995	11.9
Eastern Inner Terai	4,338	2.2
Central Inner Terai	46,279	23.2
Western Inner Terai	9,292	10.4
Eastern Terai	407,233	21.4
Central Terai	52,178	14.9
Western Terai	36,362	15.4
Nepal	1,156,371	15.6

In regional terms, the largest absolute "gain" was in Eastern terai followed by the hills and the Inner terai regions was low down in the order. However, percentile increase was the largest in the Central Inner terai including the Chitwan Valley where resettlement scheme was started in 1954. Next came

the three terai regions all of which exceeded the national average in percentile growth. Contrary to the 1941-1952/54 pattern, the hills lagged behind in percentile increase. This provides the first indication of the increasing importance of the terai region for development and settlement.² The recent study of last decade also gives the same result as observed in the table below :

Table 2.5

Population Growth in Nepal for Geographic Regions : 1971-1981.

Region	Total Population 1971	Total Population 1981	Percentage Annual Growth Rate
Mountain	1,138,610	1,302,896	1.36
Hill	6,871,407	7,163,115	1.67
Terai	4,345,966	6,556,028	4.20
Nepal	11,555,983	15,022,839	2.66

Urban population increased by 24 per cent during the decade 1961-71 and now constitute 4 per cent of the country's population. Of the total population of 16 town panchayats, 70 per cent is concentrated in the Central region, 21 per cent in the Eastern region, 13 per cent in the Western region and only 5 per cent in the Far West. Again, the towns of Kathmandu Valley (i.e., Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur) account for

54 per cent of the total urban population followed by the towns in the terai (e.g., Bhadrapur, Bhairawa, Biratnagar, Birgunj, Butwal, Dharan, Janakpur, Nepalganj and Rajbiraj) with about 37 per cent and the hill towns (e.g., Ilam, Metaula, Pokhara and Tansen) with remaining 9 per cent. Over the last decade Pihra town has shown "unusual increase" in population (close to 300 per cent) perhaps due to change in enumeration area. Of the remaining towns Janakpur shows the highest increase at 60 per cent followed by Rajbiraj (49), Nepalganj (48) and Dharan (46). Most of the urban centres are located in the Kathmandu valley and in the terai region close to Indian railheads.³ All these are evident from the following table :

Table 2.6

Growth in Urban Population of Nepal : 1961-1971.

Urban Area	1961	1971	Per cent change 1961-71
Bhaktapur	33,877	40,112	18.4
Biratnagar	35,355	45,100	27.6
Birgunj	10,769	13,001	10.7
Dharan	13,998	20,503	46.5
Janakpur	8,928	14,294	60.1
Kathmandu	121,019	150,402	24.3
Lalitpur	47,713	59,049	23.8
Nepalganj	15,817	23,523	48.7
Pokhara	5,413	20,611	280.8
Rajbiraj	5,232	7,832	49.7
Tansen	5,136	6,434	25.3
Total	336,222	416,938	37.4
Per cent of total Population	3.57	4.00	24.0

The distributional pattern of urban population, as it is to-day, is quite uneven. Out of the total urban population of the country Kathmandu alone comprises 20 per cent. Similarly, Biratnagar and Lalitpur, the second and the third most populated cities, together comprises of next 20 per cent. On the other end of the continuum, 15 petty towns together support a population equal in number to that of Kathmandu alone. The pattern of spacing of urban centres is not uniform, the Himalayan region as a whole and the far-western hills did not have a single town with a population of 9,000 or more. More facilities seem to be agglomerated in the Kathmandu valley, the Eastern and Central terai. The absence of well-planned rural development programmes and their integration with the urban development strategies of the government of Nepal, only a few urban centres are prospering.⁴

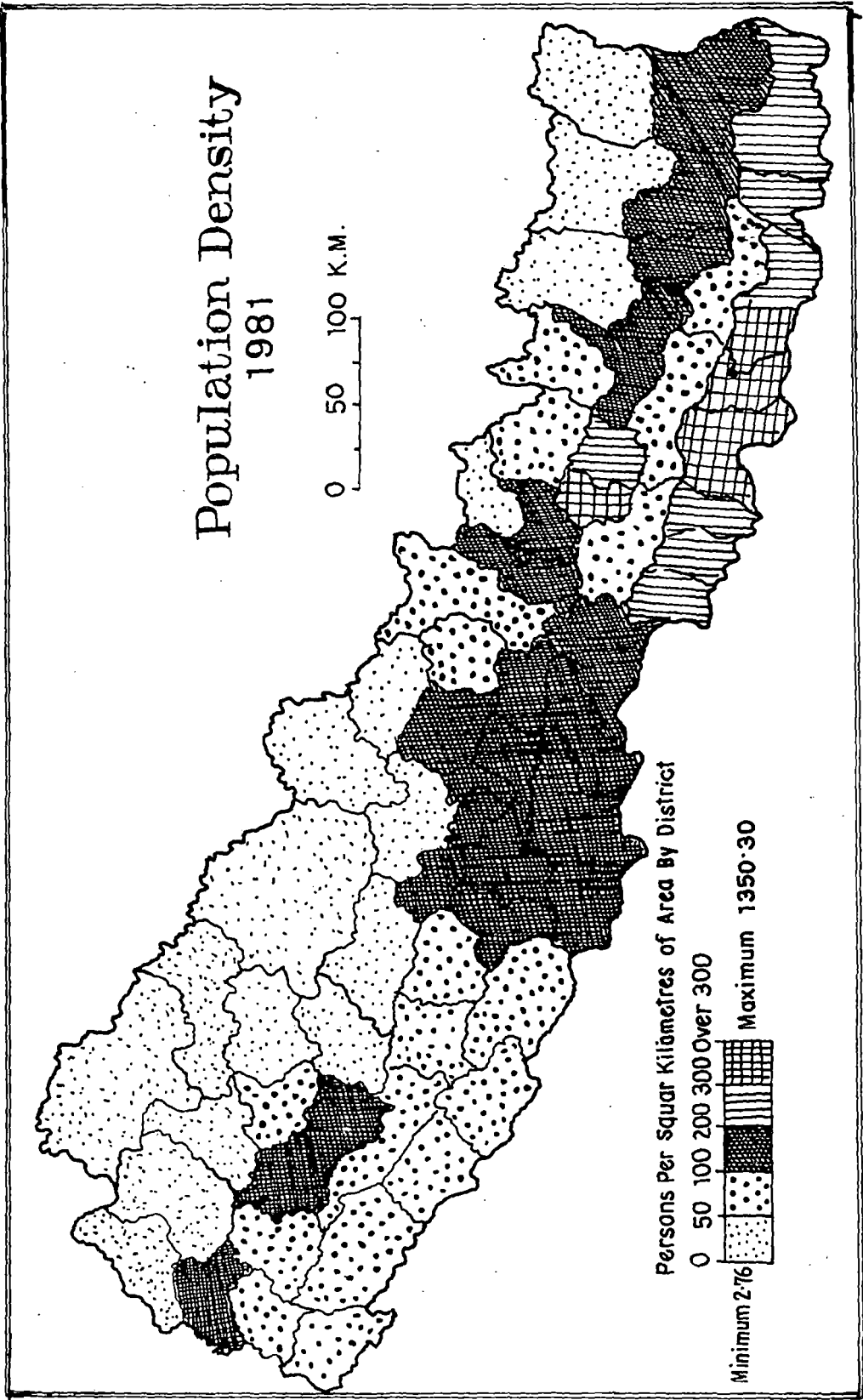
The population of eastern terai nearly doubled during the period 1952-71 but at the cost of reducing the forest area by half. The table below shows it.

Table 2.7Population Growth and Forest Depletion,
Eastern Terai : 1952-72.

District	Population		Increase	Forest (acres)		Decrease
	1952	1971		1954	1972	
Sirha	176,915	302,304	+125,389	30,400	19,700	+ 10,700
Saptari	254,658	312,565	+ 57,907	52,200	29,900	- 22,300
Morang	288,952	524,991	+296,039	230,400	119,900	-110,500
Sunsari Jhapa	80,252	247,698	+167,446	149,500	35,500	-114,000
Total	740,777	1,337,558	+676,781	462,500	205,000	-257,500

Of the 258,421 hectares of forest land in 1928 only 82,995 hectares were left in the Eastern terai and rate of depletion was progressive : 28 per cent during 1928-58, 20 per cent during 1954-64 and 36 per cent for 1964-72.⁵

During the period 1927-77 forest depletion of terai sub-region was 51.4 per cent in the East, 61 per cent in the Central and 67.7 per cent in the West. The percentile growth of population showed increasing magnitude from east to west : 121.5 per cent in the East to 217.2 per cent in the Central and 447.2 per cent in the West.



Distribution Pattern : With an average density of more than 100 persons per squ. km. in 1981, Nepal is a fairly densely-populated mountainous country. The population is unevenly distributed among the mountains, the hills, Inner terai and the terai. The broad divisions further yield regional differences from the eastern sector to the western sector via the eastern sector, roughly corresponds to the drainage basins of Kosi, Gandaki and Karnali rivers respectively.

As shown in Table 2.8, according to 1961 Census the mountains and hills regions covering 73 per cent of total area support 58 per cent of the total population with an average density of 53 persons per squ. km. Kathmandu valley though

Table 2.8

DENSITY OF POPULATION IN NEPAL

A. Density by Geographic Region, 1961, 1971, 1981.

Geographic Region	1961		1971-81	Density per squ.km.		
	% of total area	% of total population	% of total area	1961	1971	1981
Mountains & Hills	73.8	58.7	70.99	53	58.33	67.24
Inner Terai	8.6	5.6	10.59	44	58.95	82.92
Terai	17.2	30.8	17.67	120	155.94	223.47
Kathmandu Valley	0.4	4.9	0.73	815	565.63	713.89
Nepal	100.0	100.0	100.00	67	79.37	103.16

B. Density by Development Regions, 1971, 1981.

Development Regions	% of total area (1971)	Density per squ.km.	
		1971	1981
Eastern Devl.	19.25	99.93	130.3
Central Devl.	19.39	137.09	179.1
Western Devl.	25.10	67.54	106.4
Far Western Devl.	36.24	46.06	67.6
Nepal	99.98(100.00)	79.48	102.1

C. Density by District, 1971, 1981.

District	% of total area (1971)	Density per squ.km.	
		1971	1981
Mechi	4.95	85.67	113.8
Koshi	5.59	106.48	147.2
Sagarmatha	8.69	103.85	127.7
Janakpur	0.06	138.33	174.6
Bagmati	7.34	140.19	189.1
Narayani	5.75	131.77	173.1
Gandaki	8.33	84.39	90.2
Bhaulagiri	10.60	17.95	55.7
Lumbini	6.17	129.94	174.7
Karnali	9.22	14.02	11.4
Rapti	6.53	74.26	83.6
Bheri	7.24	54.62	79.3
Seti	8.58	47.81	63.3
Mahakali	4.64	53.43	75.1

lying in the hill region, however, supports a dense population owing to its rich soil and advantage being a metropolitan centre. It covers a mere 0.4 per cent of the total area but claims 4.9 per cent of the total population with an average density of 815 persons per squ.km. and urban density even exceeds 20,000 persons per squ.km. The Inner terai cover only 8 per cent of the total area and claim 5 per cent of total population with an average density of 44 persons per squ.km. It is interesting to note that the Inner terai has 20 times the area of Kathmandu Valley but population share to the national total is about the same as of Kathmandu. The terai region adjacent to the Indian plain on the other hand has a high density of population. The average density is 120 persons per squ. km, though supports only 15 per cent of the total area and 30 per cent of the total population.

There are equally interesting inter-regional differences in population distribution indicating a definite advantage of the wetter eastern part over the drier western part of the country for human occupancy. In the mountains and hills, population density per squ.km. varies from 72 in the East to 67 in the Central and 34 persons in the West. In the terai also population density per squ.km. decreases from 166 in the East to 118 in the Central and 37 persons in the

West. The reverse pattern is observed in the Inner terai, though the difference is negligible.

In general, there is a heavy concentration of population in the eastern part of the country. The Kosi sector (Eastern mountains & hills, Eastern Inner terai and Eastern terai) is covered by 31 per cent of the total area in comparison to the 41 per cent area covered by the Karnali sector (Western part of the country). But in terms of population, while Karnali sector has only 22 per cent of the total population, the Kosi sector has 50 per cent. The Gandaki sector (the Central part of the country) represents a transitional zone. In terms of population density, the Kosi sector has about twice high density (106 persons per squ.km.) as that of the Gandaki sector (69) and three times as high as that of the Karnali sector (35).⁶

During 1971-1981, the highest increases in population density were recorded in the terai region which covers 17.6 per cent of the total area, with an average increase in density from 156 to 223 persons per squ.km. The highest increase occurred in the Eastern terai where the density in 1981 reached twice the national density. The second highest was the Central terai; the Western terai, that had only about one-third of national density in 1971, also slightly exceeded the national average in 1981.

The districts of Kathmandu valley (Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur) and Mahottary in the terai is recorded mostly densely populated areas of the country with over 800 persons per squ.mile. About 70 per cent of the districts in the mountains have lower densities of less than 100 persons per squ. mile whereas comparable per cent of the districts in the terai have relatively high densities of 300 or more persons per squ.mile. The densities of the majority of the districts of the hills (65 per cent) fall somewhere between the densities found in the mountains and terai.

In fine, population increase was most pronounced in the terai region, particularly in the districts at the eastern and western corners.⁷

Population Density by Cultivated Area : Although population density expressed as the number of persons per squ.km./mile is a useful measure for accessing population pressures on land, a more refined measure is the number of persons per squ.km./mile of cultivable land. This is particularly useful in identifying the disparity between different areas of the country in terms of the population pressures on agriculture. In Nepal, much of the surface area of the hills and mountains - perhaps 87 per cent or more is unsuited for agriculture because the gradient is too steep, because of the lack of top soil or because the elevation makes agriculture impractical. This is

because agriculture which is the main occupation of the country has the extra burden of population. The following table presents all these.

Table 2.9

Population Density of Cultivable Land Area in Nepal and Other Selected Countries, 1971.

Country/Geographic region	Average number of persons per sq.km.
Nepal	598
X Mountain	1244
X Hill	1053
X Terai	341
Bangladesh	823
Thailand	309
Iran	185

Source : Ministry of Food & Agriculture, H.M.C., 1972.

While about 14 per cent of the land area of Nepal is under cultivation the proportions for the three geographic areas are markedly different. About 40 per cent of the land area in the terai are cultivable but these percentages drop to less than 10 per cent in the hills and 2 per cent in the mountains. The magnitude of these

differences is highlighted further by the differences in density between the areas. As seen in the table 2.9 above, the mountains have over three and one-half times as many people per sq.km. of cultivable land as the terai while the hills have over three times the number as the terai. Hence those areas least able to support their population (those which have the lowest proportions of cultivable land) have the greatest population pressures on agriculture.⁸ Thus, the hills and mountains are very densely populated in terms of the actual quantity of productive land.

As a result, the hill regions face considerable grain deficits. Aside from the urbanising Kathmandu valley, such deficits are highest in the Far Western hills and decline somewhat as one moves eastwards. In the terai and the Inner terai regions, there is a considerable amount of surplus grain production, with the surplus increasing as one moves westwards, the reverse pattern in the hills. As displayed in Table 2.10 below, there is a clear relationship between the size of the deficit or surplus production in a region and the population density per sq.km. of arable land and the amount of arable land per capita. Population densities per sq.km. of arable land in the terai run from one-tenth to one-third of that of the hills. Further, in some areas of the

terai, grain surplus production reaches almost one-half ton per capita. Due to a lack of transportation facilities and poverty of the hill people, the surplus grain produced in the terai finds its way south to India, rather than to deficit areas in the hills to the north. The marked differences in agricultural production and population density between the terai and the hills have resulted in the migration of a considerable number as discussed later on.⁹

Table 2.10

Per Capita Surplus or Deficit Grain Production, Arable Land and Population Density per sq.km. of Arable Land by Region of Nepal for 1961-62.

Region	Per capita grain surplus or deficit in metric tons.	Popula- tion per sq.km. of arable land.	Arable land per capita in hec- tares	Ratio of Population absent from home for six months or more per 1000.	
				Within Nepal	Outside Nepal
Far Western Hills	- 0.043	2534	0.058	2.5	43.7
Western Hills	- 0.036	1562	0.091	8.4	77.6
Eastern Hills	- 0.024	1586	0.093	10.2	42.7
Kathmandu Valley	- 0.079	2562	-	16.2	15.4
Far Western Terai	+ 0.442	232	0.596	-	-
Western Terai	+ 0.169	363	0.425	-	-
Eastern Terai	+ 0.135	457	0.338	-	-
Western Inner Terai	+0.326	264	0.589	-	-
Eastern Inner Terai	+0.093	627	0.243	-	-
Central Inner Terai	+0.127	706	0.218	-	-

SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMPOSITION

Education : Literacy (defined roughly as the ability of a person to read and write) is extremely low in Nepal, particularly among females. As seen in Table 2.11 below, less than 15 per cent of the total population was categorised as literate in 1971; however, among males the proportion reached almost 24 per cent while among females the proportion was less than 5 per cent. This disparity was also apparent in the results from the two previous censuses. In 1952/54 slightly less than 10 per cent of the males were literate while less than 1 per cent of the females were literate; and in 1961 less than 15 per cent of males were literate compared to less than 2 per cent of females.

Table 2.11

Proportion Literate by Sex and Year for the Population Aged 6 years and Older in Nepal.
(Per cent)

Year	Male	Female	Total
1952/54	8.3	0.7	4.0
1961	14.6	1.6	8.0
1971	23.6	3.9	13.9

As would be expected from these data, on literacy the level of educational attainment in the country is extremely

low (Table 2.12a below). Almost 97 per cent of the population aged 6 years and older has no formal education. Among females over 99 per cent fall into this category followed by about 94 per cent of males. This disparity is accentuated further when age is controlled (Table 2.12b below). In the youngest age groups the differences are greatest and throughout the entire age structure the proportions of females in any of the education groups never even reaches the level of 1 per cent.¹⁰

Table 2.12a

Percentage Distribution of Nepalese Males and Females by Educational Attainment Aged 6 years and over, 1971.

Education	Male	Female	Total
None	93.9	99.3	96.7
Primary (1-5)	3.1	0.3	1.6
Middle (6-8)	1.2	0.2	0.7
High (9-10)	1.3	0.0	0.7
Intermediate (11-12)	0.3	0.3	0.2
Graduate (13+)	0.3	0.0	0.2
Total	100.1	99.9	100.1

Table 2.12b

Percentage Distribution of Nepalese Males and Females by Educational Attainment and Age, 1971.

Age	None		Primary (1-5)		Middle (6-8)		High (9-10)		Interme- diate(11-12)		Graduate (13+)	
	Male	Female	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
20-24	86.6	98.2	6.1	0.7	3.2	0.5	3.9	0.5	0.7	0.1	0.4	0.1
25-39	88.7	98.9	4.6	0.4	2.2	0.3	2.9	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.8	0.1
30-34	91.7	99.3	3.8	0.3	1.5	0.2	1.9	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.7	0.0
35-39	93.6	99.5	3.4	0.2	1.1	0.1	1.2	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.5	0.0
40-44	94.5	99.6	3.1	0.2	0.9	0.1	0.9	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0
45 +	95.7	99.8	2.7	0.1	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0

In the field of higher education, for example in case of registered graduates of Nepal, the 9,859 graduates have been classified into nine broad subjects with an additional category for doctoral degree-holders (Table 2.13 below).

Table 2.13Nepalese Graduates by Subjects, 1971.

Subject	No. of Graduates	Per cent
1. Liberal Arts	6041	61.3
2. General Science	1267	12.9
3. Commerce	1135	11.5
4. Medicine	341	3.4
5. Engineering	325	3.3
6. Law	263	2.7
7. Education	263	2.7
8. Agriculture	133	1.3
9. Veterinary	33	0.3
10. Ph.D.	57	0.6

Liberal Arts Graduates far outnumbered others and was five times that of the next competing group.

The distribution of graduates evidence a gross imbalance between Kathmandu valley and the rest of the country, between the terai and the mountain region and the east-west dimensions. Table 2.14 below shows the graduate/population ratio by regions wherein it is apparent that only Kathmandu valley and the Eastern terai have a ratio more favourable than the national ratio.

Table 2.14Graduate/Population Ratio and Graduates
by Region in Nepal, 1971.

Region	Graduate/ Population Ratio	No. of Graduates	Per cent
Eastern Mountain	1 : 3983	76	0.7
Eastern Hill	1 : 2213	419	4.2
Eastern Terai	1 : 1016	1633	16.5
Kathmandu Valley	1 : 124	5940	60.1
Central Mountain	1 : 10016	6	0.0
Central Hill	1 : 2384	647	6.5
Central Terai	1 : 2109	666	6.7
Western Mountain	1 : 23770	29	0.2
Western Hill	1 : 6549	122	1.2
Western Terai	1 : 2609	320	3.2
Nepal	1 : 1029	9858	10.2

It is evident from the above table that in broad regional terms the eastern sector (Kosi) with 38 per cent of total population had 21 per cent of graduates, the central sector (Gandaki) with 34 per cent of population had 13 per cent of graduates and the western sector (Karnali) with 21 per cent of population had only 4 per cent of graduates, while Kathmandu

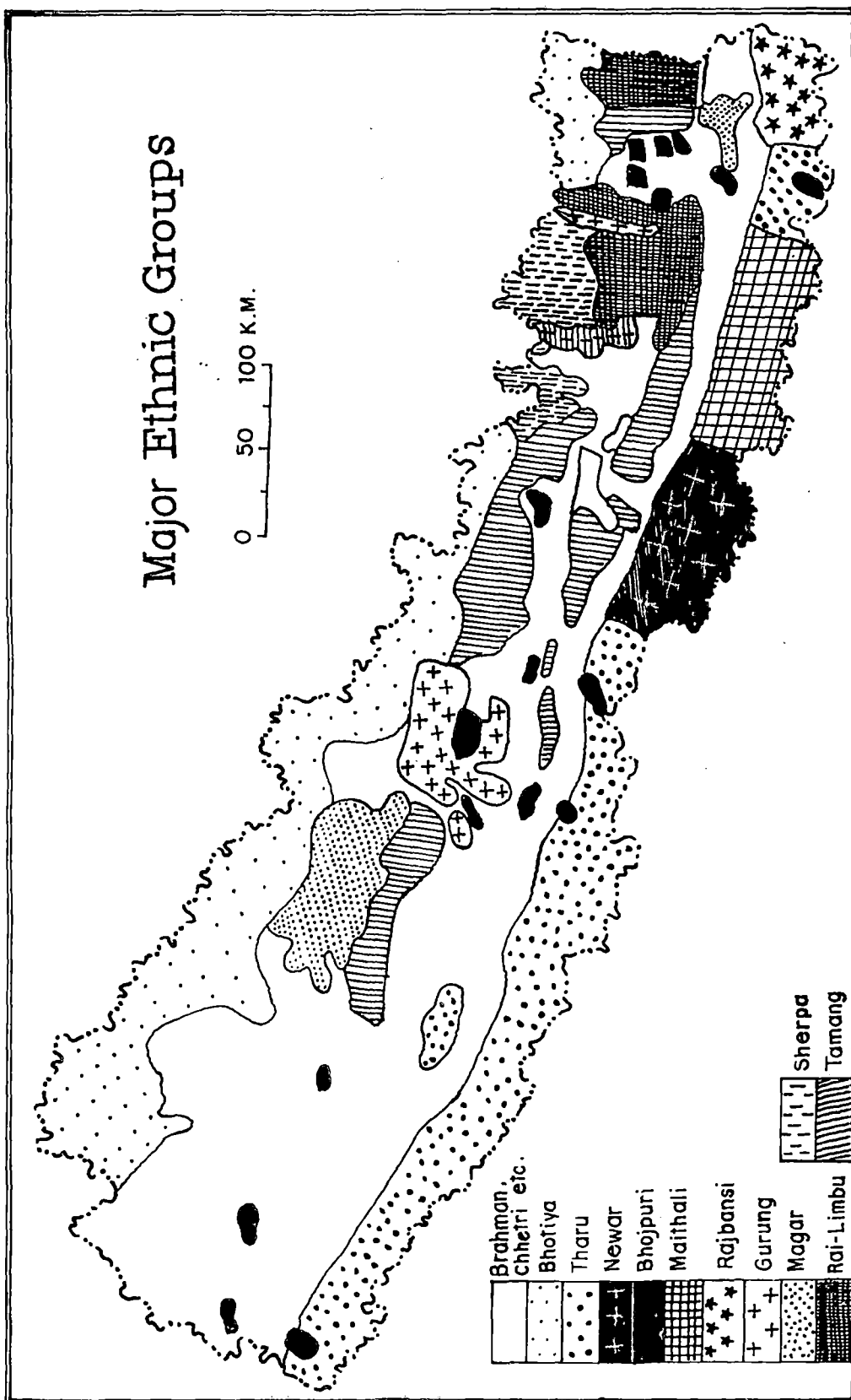
valley supporting only 5 per cent of the total population had 60 per cent of the total graduates. All these indicate that the human capital which is one of the key elements in development process has not benefited equally in the last decades.¹¹

Ethnicity and Religion : There are at least 75 major ethnic groups with about 50 different languages represented in Nepal. Although the census as received did not include a question on ethnicity it did include a question asking for 'Mother Tongue' which provides a rough indication of the ethnic distribution in the population. In addition, these data allow comparison with the previous censuses and hence changes can be assessed.

As seen in the Table 2.15 below, that over half of the population is reported 'Nepali' as their mother tongue since 1961 and about 60 per cent in 1981, representing a slight increase in proportions over the previous censuses. In the second place, 'Maithili' spoken has showed a decline of about 5 per cent from the previous decades. 'Bhojpuri' which is more than 7 per cent of the population and ranks third as the language replaced 'Tameng' in 1961 which ranked third as the language in 1952/54. The mother tongue of the remaining portion of the population for the last censuses was spread more or less evenly through the remaining nine languages.

Major Ethnic Groups

0 50 100 K.M.



Brahman,
Chhetri etc.

Bhotiya

Tharu

Newar

Bhojpuri

Maithali

Rajbansi

Gurung

Magar

Rai-Limbu

Sherpa

Tamang

Table 2.15

Percentage Distribution of Nepalese
Population by Mother Tongue,
1952/54 - 1981.

Mother tongue	1952/54	1961	1971	1981
Nepali	47.7	51.0	52.4	58.4
Maithili	16.8	12.8	11.9	11.1
Bhojपुरी	0.2	6.1	7.0	7.6
Tamang	6.0	5.5	4.8	3.5
Tharu	4.4	4.3	4.3	3.6
Newar	4.7	4.0	3.9	3.0
Abadi	4.4	4.7	2.7	1.5
Magar	3.3	2.7	2.5	1.4
Rai, Kirati	2.9	2.6	2.5	1.5
Gurung	2.0	1.7	1.5	1.2
Limbu	1.8	1.5	1.5	0.9
Others	4.8	3.1	5.5	6.3
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Officially Nepal is a Hindu kingdom and this is reflected in its religious composition which has remained relatively stable over the last three decades. Almost 90 per cent (Table 2.16 below) of the total Nepali population are Hindus with the remaining proportions Buddhists and Muslims, respectively.¹²

Table 2.16Percentage Distribution of Nepalese
Population by Religion, 1952/54-1981.

Religion	1952/54	1961	1971	1981
Hinduism	88.9	87.7	89.4	89.5
Buddhism	8.6	9.3	7.5	5.3
Islam	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.7
Others	less than 0.1	less than 0.1	less than 0.1	2.5
		0.1		
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Labour Force : The predominantly rural character of Nepal is reflected in its industrial and occupational structure. As seen in the table 2.17 below, extremely little change has occurred in the industrial structure of the country. Over 90 per cent of the labour force through the last two decades has been employed in agricultural and agricultural-related industries.

Table 2.17

Percentage Distribution of Nepalese Labour Force
by Major Industry Categories, 1952/54 - 1971.

Category	1952/54	1961	1971
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	93.5	93.8	94.4
Mining, Quarring	-	-	-
Manufacturing	1.9	1.9	1.1
Electricity, Gas, Water	-	-	-
Construction	0.2	0.1	0.1
Commerce	1.4	1.1	1.3
Transport and Communication	0.5	0.4	0.2
Finance and Business Service	0.3	1.9	0.1
Personal and Community Services	0.2	0.8	2.8
All	100.0	100.0	100.0

The Censuses show negligible increase in the number of people engaged in secondary and tertiary activities.¹³

Table 2.18

Economically Active and Not Economically
Active Population of Nepal

Year	Total Population	Total Eco- nomicallly Active	% of Total Population	Total Economically Not Active	% of Total Population
1952/54	82, 35, 079	41, 53, 455	50.43	40, 81, 624	49.57
1961	94, 12, 996	43, 06, 839	45.75	51, 06, 157	54.25
1971	1, 15, 55, 983	48, 52, 524	42.08	67, 03, 459	57.92

Source : C.B.S, 1971.

Data regarding the employment pattern of male and female workers separately are also given in the Table 2.19 below. The proportion falling into the category of farmers and related workers is significantly higher in case of women, both in rural and urban areas.

Table 2.19

Employment Pattern : Occupational Distribution of Economically Active Population of Nepal (Per cent), 1977.

Occupational group		Farmers and Related Workers	Production/ Labour workers	Service Workers	Sales Workers	Clerical Workers	Professional/Technical Workers	Administrative Workers	All workers
Area									
Rural Nepal	M	79.50	6.36	2.76	1.65	8.91	0.75	0.07	100.0
	F	93.32	4.12	1.18	0.78	0.94	0.11	-	100.0
	T	85.88	5.32	2.03	1.25	5.02	0.46	0.04	100.0
Urban Nepal	M	26.39	20.00	4.03	19.03	26.25	4.23	0.07	100.0
	F	64.24	9.92	5.59	14.80	3.91	1.54	-	100.0
	T	38.96	16.65	4.54	17.63	18.83	3.34	0.05	100.0
Nepal Total	M	70.73	8.61	2.97	4.52	11.77	1.33	0.07	100.0
	F	90.34	4.71	1.63	2.22	0.84	0.26	-	100.0
	T	79.45	6.89	2.37	3.50	6.91	0.85	0.04	100.0

Note : M, F and T stand for male, female and total (of both sexes) respectively.

Source : A Survey of Employment, Income Distribution and Consumption Pattern in Nepal, N.P.C., H.M.G., Nepal, p.47

In addition, the Composition of Nepalese population exhibits other traditional characteristics. The dependency ratio* (i.e., ratio of non-earning to earning members) that used to be 77 in 1952/54 increased to 82 in 1961 and 85 in 1971. Again the percentage of economically active population declined from 50.43 in 1952/54 to 45.75 in 1961 and 42.08 in 1971 with corresponding increase in economically inactive population by 49.57 in 1952/54 to 54.25 in 1961 and 57.92 in 1971. The above phenomena amply reveal the marginal impact of development efforts made so far in Nepal.¹⁴

A detailed study was conducted by the N.P.C., H.M.G. as to calculate the dependency ratio in different categories of Nepalese population in the year 1977. The following table 2.20 provides all these informations clearly.

$$* \text{ Dependency Ratio (DR)} = \frac{P_0 - 14 + P_{60+}}{P_{15-59}} \times 100$$

Table 2.20

Earning and Non-Earning Members of Households and Dependency Ratios : Rural and Urban Areas of Development Regions and Rural Areas by Geographic Regions, Nepal.

Region		Average No. of persons in Main Occupation per Household	Average No. of Non-Earning Members Per Household	Percentage of earning members to Total Population.	Percentage of non-earning members to Total Population	Ratio of Earning to Non-earning Members	Dependency Ratio
Eastern	Rural	3.08	2.79	51.95	48.05	1.10	0.91
	Urban	2.12	3.62	36.97	63.03	0.59	1.71
Central	Rural	3.24	2.76	54.02	45.98	1.17	0.85
	Urban	2.21	4.07	35.20	64.80	0.54	1.85
Western	Rural	3.53	2.42	59.25	40.75	1.45	0.69
	Urban	2.80	3.24	46.35	53.65	0.86	1.16
Far Western	Rural	3.75	2.96	55.87	44.13	1.27	0.79
	Urban	2.04	3.88	34.45	65.55	0.53	1.90
Nepal	Rural	3.36	2.72	55.24	44.76	1.23	0.81
	Urban	2.31	3.73	38.29	61.71	0.62	1.61
All Nepal		3.16	2.91	52.08	47.92	1.09	0.92
Rural Nepal	Mountains	3.33	2.63	55.88	44.12	1.27	0.79
	Hills	3.47	2.72	56.08	43.92	1.28	0.78
	Terai	3.26	2.75	54.31	45.69	1.19	0.84

Source : A Survey of Employment, Income Distribution and Consumption Pattern, N.P.C., H.M.G., Nepal, 1977, pp.50-51.

INTER-REGIONAL AND INTER-COUNTRY MIGRATION PROBLEM

A historical perspective on the population of Nepal indicates the important role of Migration in changing the population size of different regions. During the census of 1920, the hill region (including Kathmandu valley) accounted for 62 per cent of the country's total population of 5.5 million. The share of the terai region was 35 per cent and that of the Inner terai only 3 per cent. Sixty years later in 1981, the percentage of the hill population decreased to 46 per cent. The percentile increase during 1920-81 period was 274 in the Inner terai, 196 in the terai and 124 in the hills compared to the national average of 154. During the period 1952/54-81, the population density in the hills increased from 49 to 67 persons per sq.km. On the other hand, density increased from 41 to 83 in the Inner terai and 97 to 223 in the terai. Four out of five migrants have their destination to the terai. The eastern terai received 37 per cent, the central terai 32 per cent and the western terai about 14 per cent of the total migrants. Emigration and immigration both contributed to regional population size and indicate push and pull factors among regions. The emigrants are predominantly from the hills and the majority have India as their destination. On the other hand, terai is the destination of the most hill migrants as well as migrants from outside the country, be they foreign-born or aliens.¹⁵

The internal or inter-regional migration of people from the mountain and hill region towards the plains of the terai in the south has a steady rise since the 1950s. The main reasons for such migration may be stated as follows : First, the hill region of Nepal suffers from the increasing population pressure on agricultural land intensified by low productivity and soil erosion. As agriculture is the main livelihood of the hill people, the small size of the farm (the average size of agricultural holding is ranging from 0.4 to 0.6 hectares in the hills compared to 3 to 5 hectares in the terai area) having no extension of cultivated land, as well as their low productivity, food-deficits and soil erosion for heavy ploughing, make their income limited even for maintaining bare necessities.

Secondly, large internal migration occurs, though seasonal in nature, during the slack agricultural season, usually from October/November to March/June. The purpose of this type of migration is often to sell cottage industry products, such as ghee and herbs, then to find temporary employment, often as agricultural labourers, and finally, to purchase cloth, kerosene, rice and return home. According to Gurung, as estimated 25 per cent of the hill people participates in this migratory pattern during the winter months.

Thirdly, the decline of traditional trade of the hill people of Nepal with Tibet tends the population movement of the

region towards south in search of employment and trade.

Fourth, since the introduction of malaria eradication and success of the programme in mid-1950s, the terai region has become a new frontier for pioneer settlement. Thus, the opening of the terai as a habitable place releases the pressure of population from the hills. Moreover, the opening of new fertile low-lands of the Inner terai and terai through forest depletion or encroachment as squatters in the terai forest land by the hill migrants has a great influence on the increase of terai population.

Fifth, earlier development plans of Nepal naturally allocated resources in those regions where there existed some basic infrastructure for implementation. Thus, the existence of basic infrastructure in the terai, ease of transportation, availability of social services and other urban facilities provided impetus to migration of the hill people to the terai.

Sixth, as agriculture is the only source of livelihood and due to low level of developmental activity in the hills, the hill region suffers from the lack of alternative employment opportunities or sources and thus leads to natural flow of hillmen to the terai.¹⁶

Finally, one study in CIDA Seminar on 'Population and Development', indicates that "although population has increased in the terai, this has not been accompanied by a decrease in the hills. The growth rate in the hills may have decreased but the absolute number of people has not. The problem of the hills is not solved by shifting people to the terai, because it is only the incremental population which is being shifted".¹⁷

The patterns of inter-regional migration in Nepal can be summarised to have a clear idea from the following table :

Table 2.21

Patterns of Inter-regional Migration in Nepal, 1971.

Destination Origin	Mountains	Hills	Kathmandu Valley	Terai	Total (out- migra- tion)	Net migra- tion.
Mountains	-	11,905	3,762	33,990	49,657	- 39,959
Hills	8,401	-	19,513	3,52,837	380,751	-3,40,922
Kathmandu valley	857	21,390	-	23,237	45,484	- 19,044
Terai	440	6,534	3,165	-	10,139	+3,99,925
Total (In-migration)	9,698	39,829	26,440	4,10,064	4,86,031	—

From the above table, it appears that of the ten recognised regions (broadly four), only the three regions of the terai were

net gainers. There is a distinct correlation between the net loss in the three hill regions corresponding the gain in the contiguous terai regions. In other words, the eastern terai gained most (+1,75,532) against eastern hill (-1,69,345), central terai gained next (+1,55,247) against central hill (-1,10,890), and western terai gained (+69,146) more than what the western hill lost (-60,687). Other loosing regions in order of magnitudes were eastern mountain (-31,531), Kathmandu Valley (-19,044) and western mountain (-7,556).¹⁸

Immigration or in-migration is another source of population growth at the regional level of Nepal. Most of the people immigrating to Nepal have settled in the terai region. Immigration of foreign nationals, mainly Indians, increased by 25 per cent during 1961-71 and there were 3,37,448 foreign-born in the total population in 1971. About 96 per cent (3,22,716) of all the immigrants came from India, mostly from neighbouring states - Uttarpradesh and Bihar. The second source of immigration has been from Burma and Malaysia (Table 2.21). During the British period, large number of Nepalese migrated into these countries in search of job and land. Now quite a few of them and their children are returning to Nepal owing to the recent political changes in these countries. In 1971, 6,364 people came from Burma and another 6,131 came from other Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc. In the same period, 1,534 persons immigrated to Nepal from China,

particularly from Tibet. Most of the Tibetan Chinese immigrants have gone to the mountain and hill regions and the Kathmandu valley. Some have settled in the central terai.¹⁹

Table 2.22

Immigration : Percentage of Foreign-Born
by Place of Origin, 1961-71.

Place of Origin	1961 (per cent)	1971 (Per cent)
India	96.0	95.6 (3, 22, 718)
China	2.4	0.4
Burma	0.3	1.9
Others	1.3	2.2
Total	100.0 (N=3, 37, 620)	100.0 (N=3, 37, 448)

According to the-then Prime Minister, Mr.S.B.Thapa, the number of Indian immigrants was 5.8 million, more than one-third of Nepal's population of 15 million. It put the influx of Indians at the rate of 3, 00, 000 each year. The Indian External Affairs Ministry put the number at 3.2 million, of which 2.3 million had already acquired Nepalese citizenship. The Indian Embassy at Kathmandu contended that the number was, 1, 50, 000 and considered it a "non-issue".²⁰

According to a survey of 100 terai villages conducted by Dr. Fred Gaige in 1966-67, emigration from India might have been larger than the emigration of Nepali hill people into the terai. The flow of landless labourers from Bihar into the terai seems to continue steadily, and the number of Marwari shopkeepers and urban dwellers from India is increasing in the fast-growing terai towns such as Biratnagar, Birganj and Nepalganj. A sizeable portion of labourers engaged in the construction of the East-West Highways in the terai are Indians. The opening of the terai with improved communication and transportation may attract private investment and emigrants from the neighbouring district of India.

It is an open secret that Indian labour^{are} engaged in terai farms mainly for the reason that it is the easiest way of circumventing the provision of 'land to the tiller'. The Indian workers being aliens can not become owners under any circumstances by virtue of tilling the land. So then, the present landlord farmers will continue to employ labour force across the border for the fear of losing land to the local migrated people.²¹

With the expansion of railways in north India during the last quarter of the 19th century, the role of the terai changed from one of political frontier to that of as a source

of forest revenue. Extension of railways to the Nepalese border also created beach-head of Indian economy in the terai and led to the growth of early towns with some urban activities. Due to the increasing importance of the terai both as source of forest and land revenue during the Rana period, the terai emerged as a rich exploitable ^{region} commodity for the State. Thus, immigrants from India had started to increase the population growth of the area dramatically.

Migration from outside into Nepal has often been pointed out as the primary vehicle behind the growth of population of Nepal. Historical evidence documented the encouragement of migrants (in small ethnic/cultural and caste groups) into the hills and the terai during the 19th century, most of the migration into the hills had stopped by the beginning of the 20th century, creating base population from which natural increases caused in the following years. Thus, the role of immigrants have its impact on accelerating population development of Nepal, though it is not clear about the exact scale for want of available data.²²

Emigration or out-migration of Nepalese is a form of migration which played an important role in the economy of Nepal as well as India. The Nepali census reported that 3,28,470 were out of the country for at least six months. About 92 per cent of them proceeded towards India and they came primarily from the three hill regions (Table 2.23). The other alternative

of hillmen is India. The process of large-scale immigration of Nepalese started after Jung Bahadur Rana, the innovator of the century-old autocratic Rana-rule in Nepal, helped the British India government with Nepali soldiers to fight against the Indians who had raised the standard^{of} revolt in 1857. Dire poverty and lack of any economic opportunity have since propelled a steady immigration of people from Nepal into various parts of India, particularly Darjeeling district, areas in North Bengal along the Indo-Nepal border and Assam. This reached a new height during World War II.

Table 2.23

Emigration : Percentage Distribution of Nepalese Immigrants in various Countries, 1961.

Country	Per cent	Migration of Nepalis to India	
		Region	Number migrated
India	92.0	Eastern Hills	80,592
Malaya	3.9	Western Hills	1,50,502
Burma	0.9	Far Western Hills	74,264
China	0.3		
Unstated	2.9	Total	3,05,358 (92%)
All	100.0	(N = 3,28,470)	

The colonial rulers sedulously fostered a feeling of exclusiveness among the Nepali-speaking people, especially in

Darjeeling district. This raised psychological barriers between different sections of the population. The Bengalis in Darjeeling and the adjoining hill areas, particularly those in service and the professions, were considered intruders intent on depriving the Nepali-speaking people of their natural rights. Even after the Nepali Congress pioneered the 1950-51 revolution in Nepal, which terminated Rana-rule, the immigration has continued, the contributory factors in this being economic stagnation in Nepal and lure of job opportunities in India.²³

Thus, Nepal is a population-exporting nation. Since the middle of the 19th century thousands of young Nepalese have migrated to India to serve in the Gurkha regiments of the British and Indian armies. Still others have migrated to India to work as tea plantation labourers or cultivators in Sikkim, in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal, Darrang and Kamrup districts of Assam, in the border districts of Uttarpradesh and Bihar; and as watchmen in factories, offices and residences in Calcutta and Bombay. The 1961 Census reports that there were nearly a half million Nepali-born migrants in India, (this does not include the thousands of Nepalese born in India) and a total of one million who reported Nepali as their mother tongue.²⁴

Darjeeling had then just about 100 people who were Lepchas and not a single Nepali. This can be substantiated by the record of Bengal District Gazetteers as "when the East India Company in 1835* first acquired the nucleus of the Darjeeling district from the Raja of Sikkim, it was almost entirely under forest and practically uninhabited - this hill tract of 138 square miles contained a population of 100". It reports further "the decision of the Company to develop Darjeeling as a hill resort gave the opportunity to neighbouring peoples to immigrate and take part in the development. The original inhabitants, probably Lepchas, were rapidly outnumbered by settlers from Nepal and Sikkim. By the year 1850, Dr. Cambell, the first superintendent reported that the number of inhabitants had risen to 10,000. The rapid influx was noted by Sir Joseph Hocker when he visited Darjeeling about that time. When in 1869 a rough Census was taken of the inhabitants of this tract, the total was found to be over 22,000".²⁵

* Translation of the Deed of Grant Making over Darjeeling to the East India Company, Dated 1 February, 1835.

"The Governor-General having expressed his desire for the possession of the Hill of Darjeeling on account of its cool climate, for the purpose of enabling the servants of its government, suffering from sickness, to avail themselves of its advantages, of the Sikkimputte Rajah, out of friendship to the said Governor-General, hereby present Darjeeling to the East India Company, that is all the land south of the Great Ranjeet Rivers, east of Balasur, Kehail, and little Ranjeet Rivers, and west of Rangno and Mahanauddi Rivers".

If W.W.Hunter is any guide, "the Lepchas are considered to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the hilly portion of the district (Darjeeling). At all events they are the first known occupiers of this tract and of independent Sikkim". In his 'A Statistical Account of Bengal', published in 1880, Hunter observes : "The Nepalis, who form 34 per cent of the population of the district (Darjeeling), are all immigrants from the State of Nepal They are a pushing, thriving race, and the Deputy Commissioner is of opinion that they will in time occupy the whole district. They make capital agriculturists and are preferred as labourers by the managers of tea gardens". Even by 1876 "the population of the district is entirely rural", and even Darjeeling and Kurseong had populations less than 5,000.²⁶

The population of Darjeeling has increased by leaps and bounds in subsequent years with the development of tea industry of the area and the Nepalis as immigrants caused to raise the number. This increase in population occurred not by any natural reasons, but within the forty years duration (1850-90) this population has increased in double in each decade. As Caplan notes : "By 1891 over half the population of Darjeeling was of Nepalese origin, and one-third had been born in Nepal. Nepalese have provided the greater part of the labour force for tea estates of Darjeeling".²⁷

Table 2.24Increase in Population of Darjeeling(India)

Year	Population of Darjeeling
1850	10,000 (Cambell's report)
1871	45,000 (First Census)
1881	92,000
1891	1,50,311
1901	1,73,000

Today West Bengal has 6,15,544 (1971) Nepali-speaking people, a majority of whom reside in Darjeeling district (4,56,646 in 1971). And the 1981 census records that Darjeeling district has a population of 10,24,269. Thus, 'the people of Nepali-origin constituting the vast majority of the population there now came as immigrants from Nepal. There is, therefore, no historical validity in claiming this as a part of the territory ceded by the government of Nepal to the British Empire in India'.²⁸

The British also encouraged Nepalis to settle on waste lands in Sikkim. L. Caplan found that emigration out of east Nepal did not begin until the latter part of the 19th century. Much of the out-migration from the far eastern

hills seemed to be across the border into Sikkim. The outflow of people corresponds to growing population pressures at home, and to the opening by the British of tea estates in Sikkim and in areas further east. Nakane quotes as 'Since the year 1871 ... there was an influx of Gorkhalis from the neighbouring state of Nepal They settled down for good, and began digging, hoeing, smashing and overturning rocks, felling down trees, and turning the courses of streams at such a rate that all jungles were turned into fields, in a very short time'.

From this quote it appears that large numbers of hill folk from eastern Nepal migrated to Sikkim with the intention of settling permanently. However, under this apparent deluge, the hills of Sikkim were populated rather quickly, and this fact in combination with laws formulated to inhibit Nepali settlers reduced the feasibility of settling in Sikkim as an option for economic pressures in the eastern hills. Further, Nakane observed that migrants to Sikkim continued to stay in contact with their parent community, and that the social and economic support which they received from this contact helped them to establish themselves in their new environment.²⁹

Further north in Sikkim, which originally belonged to the Bhutias and Lepcha communities, but 70 per cent of whose

present population consist of immigrant Nepalis there is a demand that 30,000 stateless Nepalis must be given Indian citizenship and that the constitutional arrangements should be suitably modified to make it easy for the Nepali-speaking people to perpetuate their control over the levers of power.³⁰

Emigration not only served as a "safety-valve" for the 'surplus population' of the hills, but has also proved to be a source of foreign exchange earnings for Nepal. The United Kingdom pays one million pounds sterling a year in pensions to twenty thousand retired Gorkha soldiers. The Indian government's annual payment to over a hundred thousand retired Gorkha soldiers is several times higher than the above amount. According to the reliable estimate, at least one million Nepalis belong to families that can at least claim one member as a beneficiary of retirement grants from the British or the Indian government. To this must also be added several million more Nepalis who receive benefits from half a million Nepali migrants to India.³¹

British and Indian armies have recruited hill men for over one hundred and fifty years. Such employment has been favoured in the hills because it not only provides reasonable salary but can result in a lifelong pension and guaranteed schooling for children if one serves long enough. In the village of the far eastern hills L. Caplan found that approximately

44 per cent of all the living Limbu males over 18 years had served or were serving in the army. He noted that those serving usually tend to be from the poor families, and that economic hardship is usually given as the reason. Hitchcock's study of village residing the tribal Magars in the western hills, reveals that the family's mortgaged land can be repossessed only son's employment in India to raise the required cash or in the face of rising debt, they fell confident that the eldest son of the family will be able to enlist in the Indian army within a few years. He found that a Magar became wealthy and influential man in the village and also able to maintain solvency for generations through such employment. But it appears that recruiting is highly selective, based on both region and ethnicity. The recruiters traditionally have taken men from only some of the tribal groups, primarily the Magars and Gurungs (inhabited in Western and Central Nepal) and to a lesser extent from the Limbus and Rais (Eastern Nepal). Other tribal groups as the Tamangs have generally not been recruited, nor have high caste Hindus or scheduled castes. From the Far West, Dotiyals have in the past been obtained as porters and stretchers-bearers.³²

Mention here may be made of the Article 7 of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950. The provisions for reciprocity in the matter of residence and the acquisition of property in one country by the nationals of

another as provided with this Article 7 it is observed, there is nothing in it that could be taken exception to by any citizen of India or of Nepal. In fact, it offers opportunity to the inhabitants of economically less developed Nepal for trying their luck in the vast subcontinent of India. This could not be said about the ordinary Indians who might desire to settle in Nepal for better economic advantages.³³

If a compulsory birth registration scheme is not introduced and implemented strictly at this time, the Nepal terai will be involved in the citizenship disputes that have characterised the politics of Sri Lanka, Burma, and East Africa.³⁴ On the other hand, the massive migration of Nepalese to India can be stopped to a large extent by opening up more and more advanced sectors in Nepal with the help of Indian industrialists. Further, this will not only redistribute the income in Nepal and create ample economies of scale in Nepal but would also provide a distinct Indian identity to India-born Nepali-speaking people residing in India.³⁵

However, the issue is gradually ^{taking various} ~~negging~~ dimensions and more and more controversies are emerging.

Whether a migrant returns home or not must depend in part on the conditions he has left behind in the hills. That is, whether or not he left with strong kin ties; if land was still owned by his family; if he took his wife and family

with him; and, of course, the social and economic conditions he found at his destination. Weiner, M. found that 'the bulk of the annual immigrants thus leave within five years while almost all of those who remain longer than five years are lifelong residents'. In quantitative terms, Weiner opines that 'the rate of attrition rate appears to be of the following order of magnitude: a 40 per cent of the migrants leave after one year, another 30 per cent of the remainder leave after the second year, another 20 per cent after the third year, 10 per cent after the fourth year and 5 per cent or less every year thereafter. Most of the attrition after a decade is accounted for by the mortality rate'.

According to a study conducted by Weiner, using the 1961 Census figures, approximately 82,000 Nepalese migrated annually to India and each year approximately 62,000 migrants returned to Nepal after having lived in India from one to five years. One half of the 20,000 who stayed behind in India were males and other half were females. Weiner has noted that two features of this emigration warrant our attention. The first is that for most of the emigrants the outlet has been a temporary one, that is, for less than five years. As we have seen, only about 10,000 males and 10,000 females migrate permanently to India each year. Secondly, there is no evidence that in the period from 1951 to 1961 the rate of migration to

India increased, nor is there any reason to expect that in the future India will be able to provide land or substantial employment opportunities for an increasing number of Nepalis. The outlet to India is thus in no way a solution to Nepal's population growth. Weiner also observes that out of 15,000 women who emigrate each year to India, two-thirds (10,000) settle permanently. These women are generally from the terai area and move across the border to marry, often travelling no more than a few miles. For this reason, as Davis finds, 'in the border districts of Bihar (India), for instance, there were only 37 males to every 100 females of Nepalese birth, while in non-border districts the ratio was 303 per 100'.³⁶

The next question regarding emigrants revolves around the kinds of employment they seek.

As Davis notes, only 8 per cent of the Nepalese in India in 1921 were in the army, although with their dependents they represents a somewhat higher proportion. Most emigrants seek out cash-paying jobs. Over the years, certain families and villages establish contacts with permanently settled Nepalis or Indians in India. Through these contacts they are able to go directly to a city or hill station and move into a job.

As A.P. Caplan studied in the village of the far western hills, many villagers relied on outside jobs for income.

Of the untouchable cobblers, who were the poorest group in the village, almost 70 per cent had worked in India at some point in their lives. Of the high castes of that village, who for the most part were economically much better off, only 27 per cent had gone. She found that out-migration was a phenomenon occurring over the last forty years, and corresponded with increasing grain deficits which resulted from loss of land to the high caste groups through foreclosed mortgages. The men who went to India were generally between twenty and thirty years of age. They migrated for as short a time as the four sleek winter months of the agricultural season or as long as a number of years, but invariably they returned. While they were gone they usually had one of their relatives to look after their family and land, and apparently those who did not have relatives nearby found it difficult to leave.

Apparently, the low caste men usually go to the hill district of Himachal or Uttarpradesh where they can find work as porters in coal depots or in small factories. Again, many of them have friends there to assist in securing a job. The high caste men often work as loggers in the forests of the north Indian hills. Untouchables also find employment on road crews in the Indian mountains. Often they attempt to stay in groups to help each other out, and to save money through the sharing of expenses. Generally those who leave their friends and

go to the large Indian cities, fail to save money. However, those who remain with their group do reasonably well, and after a year or so can return with Rs.1,000 or more.

By bringing back such large lump sums, a number of low caste members have been able to pay off their mortgaged land. However, migration of this kind does not enable a man to raise his economic standard substantially as does military service in the Gurkhas, but savings are usually used on recurrent expenditures instead of invested.

As Bishop found in a northern part of the far western hills, many young people from poorer households seek work to the west in the hills of Kumaon in India. There, principally in the Nai-Tal-Almora area, they work as labourers in the construction and lumber industries in order to make enough money to buy their yearly needs in consumer goods while most return to their homes in the spring, some remains for a year or more.³⁷

As McDougal noted that there were considerably more economic opportunities available to secure cash income in the eastern hills than in the far western hills, although many have members serving in the British and Indian armies.

However, it seems reasonable to assume that attitudes towards and beliefs about the benefits of seasonal,

semi-permanent and permanent migration might vary considerably from group to group and village to village. Attitudes would in part be determined by the historical experiences of a village or a family with regard to migration. Those villages and families which, for example, have had members serving in the British and Indian armies for the past one hundred and fifty years have a long tradition of migration, and probably highly favourable attitudes towards it. Other villages whose members have had no military experience, because they were not from desirable ethnic groups, have no tradition of migration. If some village members had had experiences in the past in trying to find work in India, the entire village may be skeptical of the possible benefits to be derived from migration.

From the ethnographers written on the Nepali hill communities it seems that many villages have specialized patterns of migration, if they have a tradition of migration. For example, one village may send young men for the winter season to log in the Kumaon hills, while a second concentrates on sending youths to recruiting centres to join the army, a third is involved in seasonal migration for agricultural employment in the terai, and a fourth sends men for periods averaging three years to work as guards in Bombay. The traditions and beliefs held by villagers tend to channel individuals in certain directions.

In conclusion, migration is a result primarily of economic needs, particularly for cash. Whether individuals migrate is in part determined by the opportunities for acquiring cash locally, and the historical experiences of the community with migration as an economically viable enterprise.³⁸

SUMMARY

An attempt, in the above discussion, has been made to bring out the findings about population distribution and socio-economic composition and changes in Nepal.

The total population of Nepal exceeded 15 million (1981). Thus, the population of the country increased by 6.7 million since 1952/54, i.e., there was an increase of 81 per cent over the last three decades. The annual rate of population growth which averaged 1.7 per cent during 1952/54-1961 and 2.1 per cent during 1961-1971, increased to 2.6 per cent during the last inter-censal period, 1971-1981. It is reported that over half of the population of Nepal is located in the hills while slightly less than 40 per cent live in the terai. The remaining portion live in the mountains. The population of Nepal reflects the rural character with 96 per cent of the population residing in rural areas and over one-half of the remaining urban population concentrated in the Kathmandu valley. Nepal's population density could be considered one of the highest in the world. Nepal as a whole was 103.16 people per sq.kms.(1981). The population density was highest in the Kathmandu Valley (713.89 persons/squ.kms.) and in the terai (223.47 persons/squ.kms). However, when density is calculated on the basis of the ratio of population to the land under

agricultural production a very different picture emerges. The mountains have three and a half times more density than that of the terai while the hills have three times. Hence, the hill areas, having the lowest proportion of cultivable land, least able to support their population. As a result, these regions face considerable grain deficits. Thus, the marked differences in agricultural production and population density between the hills and the terai have raised the question of resettlement of the population.

The socio-economic factors that are affected by the population growth of Nepal may be briefly mentioned :

(i) Agriculture : Land under agriculture in 1980 was 19.3 per cent and land-man ratio was 1 : 0.196 hectare which has gone down to 1 : 0.8 by 1985. During the same period, foodgrain deficit has increased from 0.7 million metric tons to 1.0 million metric tons, showing a declining trend in agricultural production in Nepal. (ii) Forests : Density in forest area was 374 in 1980, forest is being fast depleted to support growing population of the country. (iii) Labour force : It has swelled up by 1.3 million in 1985. (iv) Health : There will be steady improvement in terms of doctor, patients per hospital and per health post. (v) Urbanisation : Urban population have increased from 5.8 per cent of the total population in 1980 to 6.8 per cent in 1985.

The most striking finding reveals the educational structure of the economy. While less than 15 per cent of the population aged 6 years and older are classified as literate, 97 per cent of the population have had no formal education. As expected, the educational level of women is lower than males with about 99 per cent with no education compared to about 94 per cent for males. This extremely low level of educational attainment has very obvious negative implications for population planning and development. However, the number of primary school going children has gone up from 1.2 million in 1979/80 to 2 million in 1985. In respect of higher education Kathmandu Valley and the eastern terai have a ratio more favourable than the national ratio.

Nepal's census did not include the question on ethnicity but provides that over half of the population is reported 'Nepali' as their mother tongue. 'Maithili' and 'Bhojpuri' are ranked in the second and third place respectively. Other languages are spread more or less evenly throughout the country. Almost 90 per cent of the total Nepali population is Hindu.

Over 90 per cent of Nepal's labour force is employed in agriculture and agriculturally-related industries. Employment of the male is higher in all occupations except in agriculture. NPC has found out that 63 per cent of the rural working

population (chiefly employed in agriculture) was not gainfully employed, whereas the percentage of gainful employment in urban areas stood at 55 during 1977. The percentage of economically active population declined and the dependency ratio increased.

One of the growing demographic problems is of population movement in and out of Nepal. People going out of the hills and mountains to the terai outnumbered the people coming from the terai to the hills and mountains. One of the important factors that contributed to migration was the success of malaria eradication programme introduced in 1954. With the expansion of railways in north India during the last quarter of the 19th century, the terai became "populated". The heavy dependency of population on agriculture is indicated both by the overwhelming percentage of those engaged in agriculture as well as the destination of migrants. Most migrants within the country are moving from one rural area to another. Latitudinally, they are moving from land-scarce northern hills to new lands of the terai in the south. The hill people are grabbing land from the poor terai people (e.g. Tharus). However, the migrants from the hills will probably be the 'increment of the hill people'. Four out of five migrants have their destination to the terai for their survival. Terai is also the destination of the migrants from outside the country (96 per cent come from India), be they foreign-born or aliens. It is open secret that Indian labour is engaged in

the terai farms mainly for reasons that it is easiest way of circumventing the provision of 'land to the tiller'. The Indian workers being aliens can not become owners by virtue of tilling the land. A sizeable portion of labourers engaged in the construction of the east-west highways in the terai are Indians. The population growth rate of the terai during 1981 was 4.2 per cent.

Immigration and emigration both contributed to regional population size and indicate push and pull factors among the regions. However, three types of migration in Nepal occur : first, seasonal migration mainly to the terai due to slack agricultural season, to sell cottage-industry products and to purchase cloth, salt, kerosene and other essential commodities. Secondly, recurrent or semi-permanent type of migration to the terai or India mainly in search of employment for one year or more and also for employment in military services. Third, permanent migration of landless poorer to India and well-off group of hillmen to have an alternative settlement to the terai.

India acted as a 'safety-valve' for Nepal's 'excess population'. The process of large-scale immigration of Nepalese started after Jung Bahadur Rana. In 1961, about 92 per cent people from Nepal immigrated into various parts

of India and they came primarily from three hill regions. Since the middle of the 19th century thousands of young Nepalese migrated to India to serve in Gurkha regiments. Still others migrated to India to work as tea plantation labourers or cultivators in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal, in Sikkim, Darrang and Kamrup districts of Assam, in the border districts of Uttarpradesh and Bihar; as porters in coal depots or in small factories in the hill districts of Himachal and Uttarpradesh and as watchman in factories, offices and residences in Calcutta and Bombay. Most migrants seek out cash-paying jobs and this has also proved to be a source of foreign exchange earnings for Nepal.

It is evident from the findings of population redistribution in Nepal, that all the hill and mountain areas have lost population over the last decades while all of the terai regions have gained.

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