

# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **GEOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT AND PEOPLE OF STUDY AREA**

### **2.1 Introduction**

*“To explore labour migration issues through critical and clear way, it is essential to give emphasis on spatial location of the place, because geographical location of any place determines the social and economic processes.”*

(Harvey, 1990:418-434).

The relation between space and time is essentially controlled by its spatial location on earth. There has been an emerged awareness of global and local facts that, people are perhaps more chronically mobile and routinely displaced. They explore livelihoods by managing new permanent or semi-permanent homelands. People move out due to desire or through economic necessity. Scholars have written about these movements for a long time and also from diverse perspectives (Moore, 1989:26-48; Malikki, 1992:22-44; Peck, 2003:222-232). All these theoretical shifts have arranged themselves towards an analytical visibility in recent researches. Thus, geographers have old questions, but also something very new. The metaphorical concepts of having roots involves an intimate linkage among people – core and peripheral areas. In recent decades’ geographical concepts have been used critically to comprehend migration. Migration is likely to be a core area of social, political, economic and environmental disputes in recent era. To understand these core controlling factors, we should have a clear knowledge of the concerned area’s physical, demographic and socio-cultural reality.

### **2.2 Sikkim**

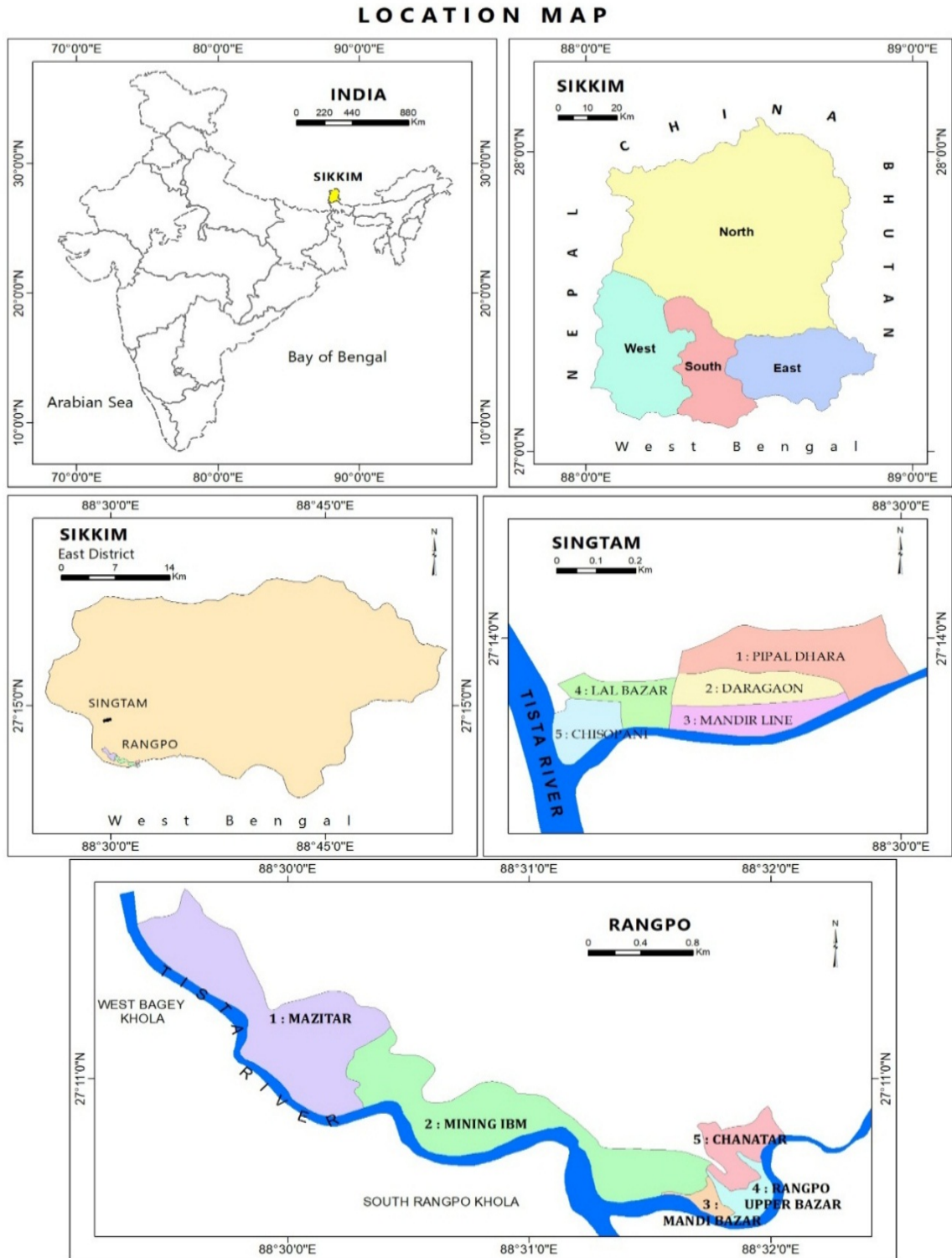
Crowned with Himalayas, sprinkled with snow covered mountains, glaciers and streams, Sikkim is the 22<sup>nd</sup> state of Indian Union and also a well-known Centre for Himalayan trade and politics since late nineteenth century. Carrying a unique political background, diverse ethnic groups, rich bio-diversity and natural resources, Sikkim has put tremendous efforts to retain stride in the contemporary time and achieved substantially. The name ‘Sikkim’ has been derived from the word

'Sukhim'- the place of happiness and peace (Kakodkar.1955: 7). In ancient time Sikkim was known as 'Mayel-Lyang', which means a hidden paradise to the Lepchas. The Tibetan name of Sikkim is "Donjong" and "Demoshong" meaning the country of valley of rice, but the present name of 'Sikkim' is of Limboo ('Su' and 'Khim') or Tsong (Nepali) origin, meaning 'a new house or place'. Other views are also present. Waddell stated that 'Sikkim' is from Sanskrit origin, which means 'Crested'. The small state sits in the Eastern Himalayas. This land locked state has been bounded in the north by enormous stretches of Tibetan Plateau, Chumbi valley of Tibet and Bhutan in the east, the Kingdom of Nepal in the west and the Darjeeling district of West Bengal in the south. Sikkim has four districts, namely East district, West district, North district and South district. The boundary between Sikkim and West Bengal has been marked by the river Rangit, Rammam, Rungpo-Chu and Rishikhola except in the Southeastern corner.

### **2.3 Location**

The state extends from 27°05' North to 28°10' North latitude and 88°04' East to 88°30' East longitude. My study area is in East district under Gangtok subdivision. East district of Sikkim state is located between 27°18'27" North to 27°24'11" North latitudes and 88°34'66" East to 88°39'25" East longitudes. Gangtok sub-division is the main centre of East district as well as the capital of the state. The area is connected by NH-31A (presently NH-10) with West Bengal. This sub-division is bounded by North district in the north, South district in the west, in east by Bhutan and China and in south by West Bengal.

Fig no. 2.1

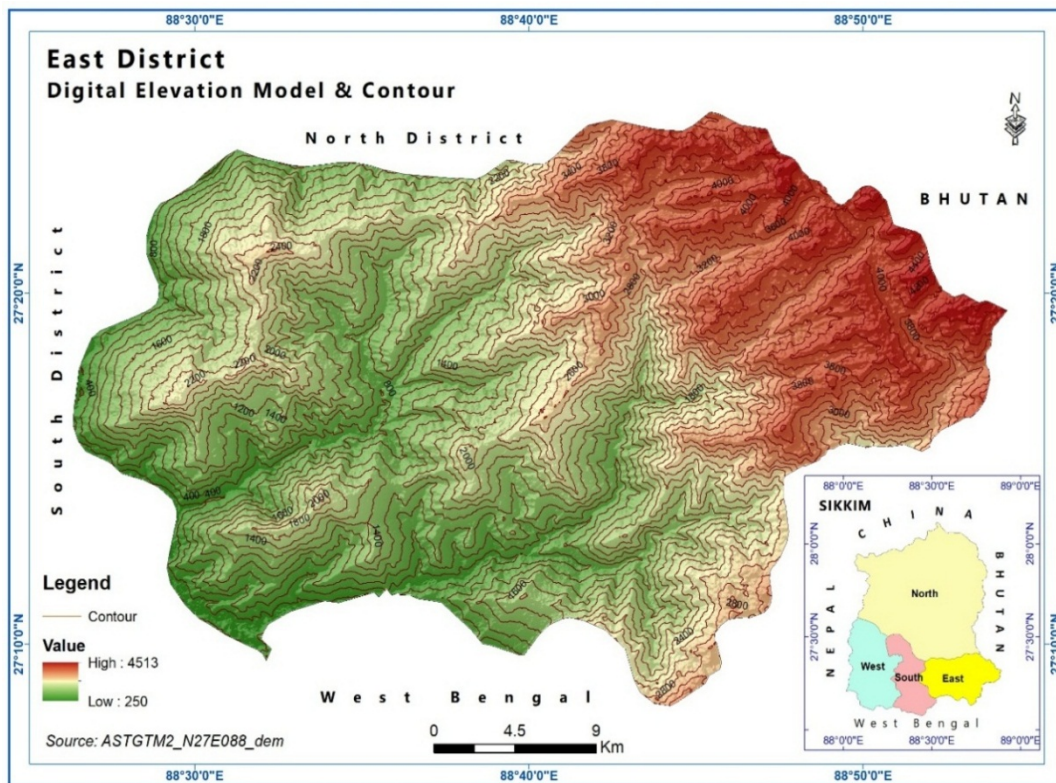


**Source:** Nagar Panchayat office of Singtam and Rangpo. (Software used: Arc GIS desktop).

## 2.4 Physiography

The physiographic divisions are not well marked in this State, because it is an essentially mountainous state with almost no flat landmass. The state is a part of inner mountain ranges of the Himalayas, elevation ranging from 300 m. to 8,540 m., but habitable areas stretch only up to the altitude of 2,100 m. This state's physiography varies from north to south due to variation of elevation only. In the northern part of the state the Great Himalayan Range and to the eastern and western parts the Chola and Singalila Ranges are situated respectively, which gradually spill towards the lower altitudes in the south and foothills. The most significant first order zones are glacial zones and high mountain areas.

Fig no. 2.2



Source: ASTGTM2\_N27E088\_dem. (ArcGIS)

The glaciers are restricted to the North and North-West. The northern part of this state is deeply cut into steep escarpments. The general trend of the slope is from east to west. There is another north to south ridge running through the central portion of Sikkim which separates the Rangit basin from Teesta valley. The entire area is a closed basin between two parallel and deeply

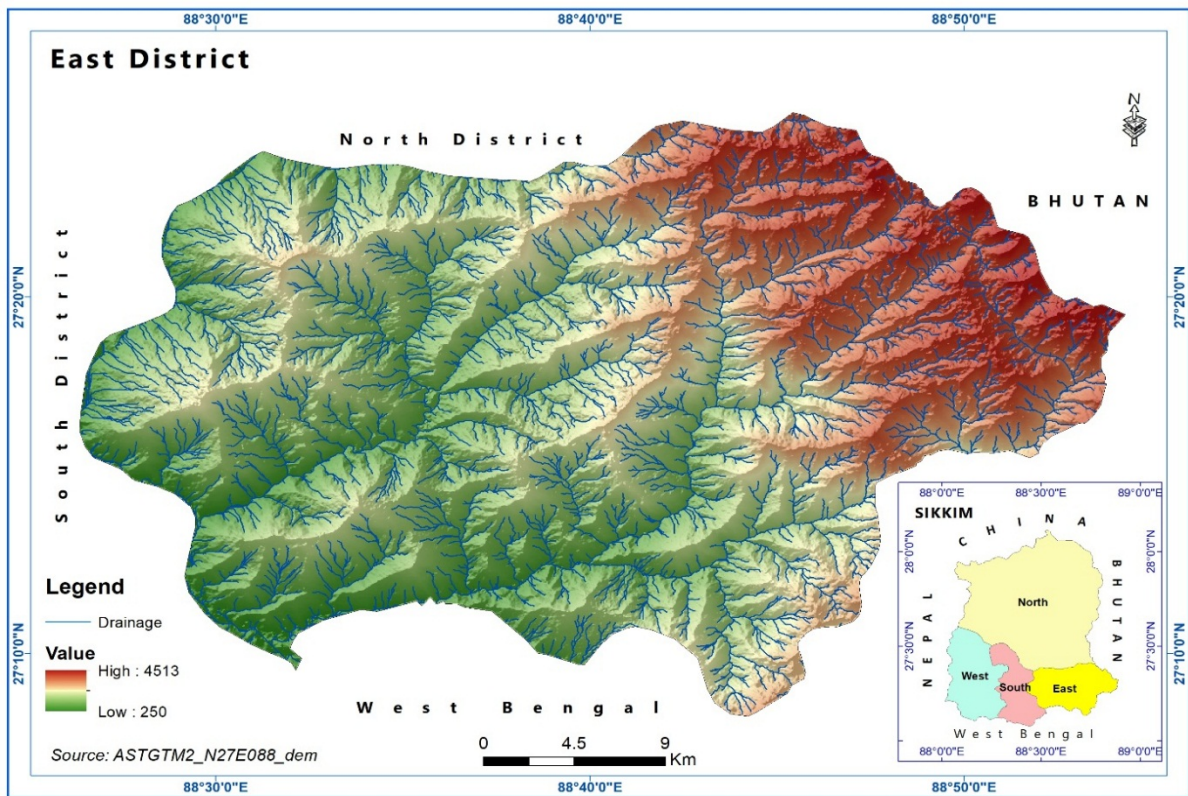
intersected transverse ridges. Presence of great Himalayan passes helped limited trade with Tibet till the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962. The dominant physiographic features of the East district are the Donkya peak (6,870 m.) in the east and Jela peak (4,350 m.) in the west. Other distinct features of East District are 4,335 m. high Nathula pass and 4,800 m. high Tongkarla peak. The relative relief of entire Sikkim is roughly 1,200 m.

History has witnessed that people have a tendency to migrate from high elevation area to low elevation area to overcome their livelihood hurdles. Afterwards, economic transformation has opened up various reasons to migrate – even also towards unfavorable physical setting (high elevation areas) to carry forward their livelihood patterns, as is evident in Sikkim. The elevations of Rangpo town (333 m.) and Singtam (426 m.) town are comparatively low among the others in East district which helped the establishment of different industries. Low elevation has accelerated the transformation process of these towns.

## **2.5 Drainage**

The drainage system of any area depends upon its physical elevation and the change in physiography in turn depends upon the flow and intensity of the rivers of the place. The topography of the state is of horse-shoe shape as it is surrounded by mountains from three sides. The largest river is the Teesta, a broad mountainous river with numerous shallows and rapids, flowing together with eastern and western tributaries. Rangeet and other rivers that originate from the glaciers drain all the intermountain plateaus and parts of eastern Himalayan mountain systems. The Teesta originates from the Zemu glacier, located in north Sikkim and have tributaries named Rechu, Rorachu, Talungchu and Rungpochu etc. The Rangeet rises from the Rathong glacier in western Sikkim. The river valleys are narrow in the north and widen towards south due to the horse shoe topography.

Fig no. 2.3



Source: ASTGTM2\_N27E088\_dem (ArcGIS).

## 2.6 Climate

Natural climate comprising wind, rain, humidity and temperature appears to have played a prominent role in the formation of various civilizations, the occupation, livelihood or the transformation of society over times, and the social and political metamorphosis of indigenous societies. Economic life of Sikkim is mainly influenced by the area's geographical features, especially by its terrain and climate. The climate of the study area is essentially noteworthy because of its location. The state experiences the powerful effect of southwestern monsoon against the Himalayan barrier and configuration of the ridges and valleys. Gangtok sub-division experiences sub-tropical to temperate climate. Annual rainfall is 3,894 mm. Summer Maximum temperature on an is average 28°C / Minimum 13.1°C and winter Maximum temperature is average 18°C / Minimum 5.3°C (Sikkim Statistical Journal 2013). In my research, the climate is considered a major factor behind the adaptation (physical) strategy of the respondents and performance of work in Rangpo and Singtam town.

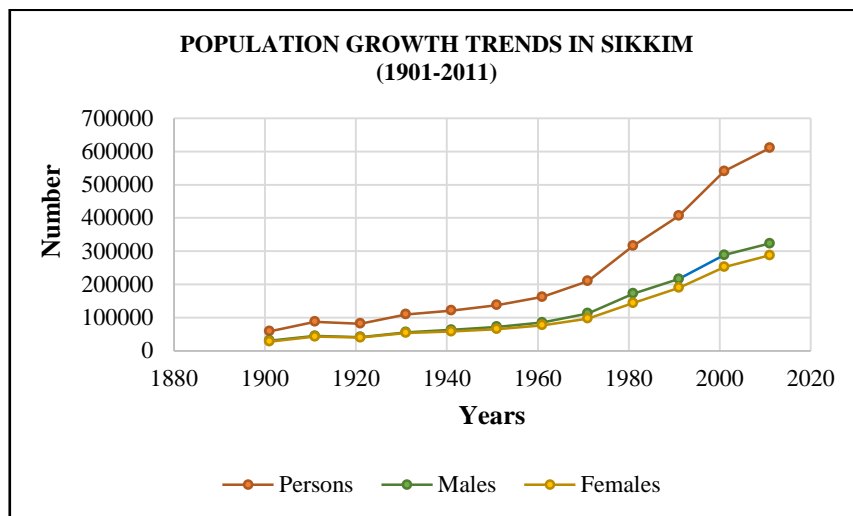
## **2.7 Demography**

Demographic study is considered specially on the changing composition of population structure but human beings have many noticeable and measurable characteristics which can differentiate one individual from other, and that is why demography study is being considered highly pertinent for population studies of a place. Distribution and density of population are unified and important aspects in population geographic studies. These aspects are significant for strategic and socio-economic planning and policy making of the state at micro level.

### **2.7.1 Distribution and Growth**

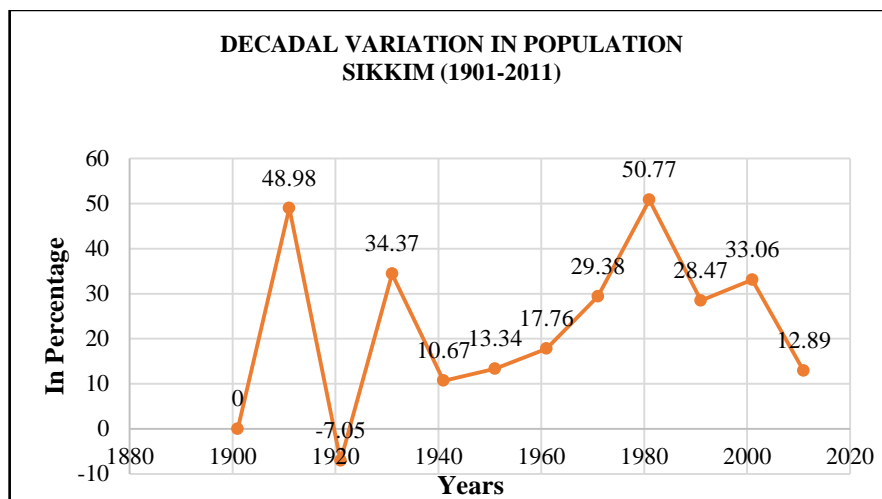
Sikkim is sparsely populated state. The state has 610,577 inhabitants (2011 Census) within the area of 7096 <sup>2</sup>km. As Sikkim is a mountainous region, the distribution of population is highly uneven. The population distribution of the state exhibits an obvious relationship between human concentration and relief factor. Therefore, the population distribution is mainly based on various altitudinal zones. The commencement of Census operation took place in Sikkim in 1891, which was guided and conducted by the census authority of West Bengal. In 1971, Sikkim Government made an effort to publish separate census report, as “The District Census Handbook 1971 Census.” Sikkim has experienced remarkable population growth between 1901 census to 2011 census (+1034.63%). The study of population growth is a fundamental demographic process and acts as a vital index of the state’s economic development, political ideology, social transformation and historical background (Chandna,1986). The growth of population in this state is actually representing the cumulative effects of demographic transition and in-migration from the neighbouring states and countries.

Fig no. 2.4



Source: Census of India, 2011, District Census Handbook, Sikkim.

Fig no. 2.5

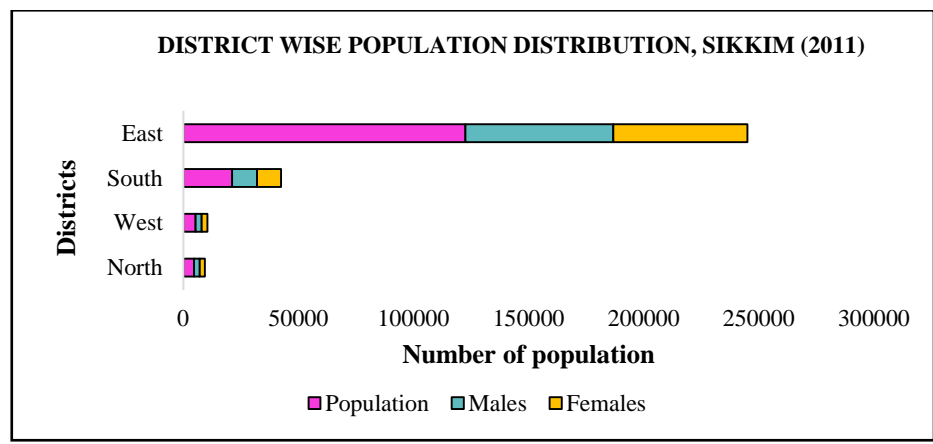


Source: State at a glance: Sikkim. Vol 1(4), 2015.

The state experienced maximum growth of population in 1971-81(50.77%), just after 1975, when Sikkim became 22<sup>nd</sup> state of India. The low population growth rate (28.47%) is observed in the preceding decade, which was due to the decrease in natural growth rate and declining trend of in-migration due to slow economic development in the state. In-migration is an important factor which has tremendous impact on population growth in Sikkim. According to the 2011 Census of India, the total population of Sikkim is 610,577 persons of which North district has 43,709 persons, 146,850

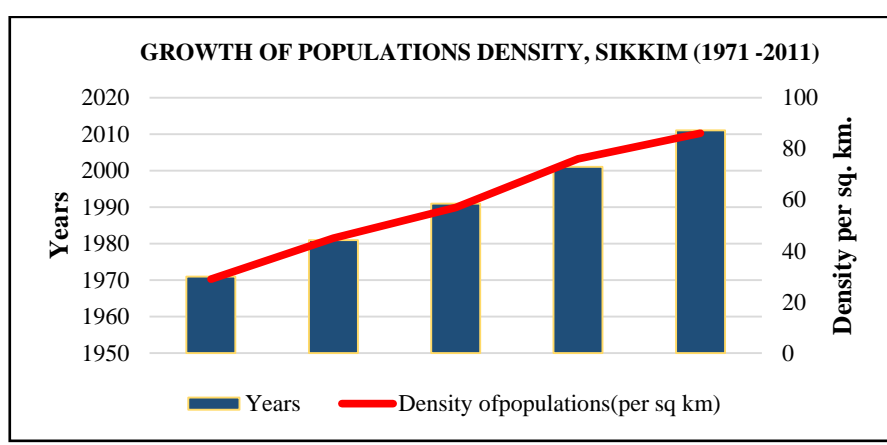
belong to the South district, West district is having 136,435 and East district has the highest populations with 283,583.

Fig no. 2.6



Source: Census of India. 2011

Fig no. 2.7



Source: i) Census of India: 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011, ii) Sikkim Statistical Profile (1979-80 & 1991-92).

The density of population in the state is 86 persons/sq. km (2011 Census). There is steady growth in density of population in Sikkim. In 1971, Sikkim was having only 29 persons/sq. km, 45 persons/sq. km in 1981, 57 persons/sq. km and 76 persons/sq. km in 1991 and 2001 respectively.

## 2.7.2 Rural-Urban Composition

2011 Census of India reveals that 74.85% of the state population lives in rural areas and only 25.15% people in urban areas. District wise rural urban composition of the state is very much significant. In the North district 89.38 per cent lives in rural areas, and the lone town Mangan (NP)<sup>1</sup> accounts for 10.62 per cent urban population. In West district 96.10 per cent population lives in rural areas and 3.85 per cent lives in Gyalsing (NP) and Nayabazar (NBA)<sup>2</sup> towns. South district has little more urban population in Namchi (M.C1)<sup>3</sup> and Jorethang (NP) with 14.4 per cent. East district is having maximum number of people living in urban areas: 43.19 per cent population lives in Gangtok (M.C)<sup>4</sup>, Singtam (NP), Rangpo (NP) and Rhenock (CT)<sup>5</sup> while 56.8 lives in rural areas. Higher concentration of urban population in East district is due to the fact that all major urban centers including Census town are located in this district. There has been a remarkable disparity between rural population growth and urban population growth. Rural population growth has been - 4.99 per cent and that of urban has been 156.52 % in 2011 census. Urban male decadal change by last residence is 145.4% (2011 Census). Present sex ratio in Sikkim is not at all satisfactory at 890 females per 1000 males. The population growth in urban areas is accredited to the huge rate of in-migration, mostly after merger. However, in 1981-91, the growth of urban population showed a negative (-27.65%) growth (Census of India, 1991: XII), because of the exclusion of considerable portion of some areas, which were treated as urban areas previously.

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<sup>1</sup> NP: Nagar Panchayat

<sup>2</sup> NBA: Notified Bazaar Area

<sup>3</sup> MC1: Municipal Council

<sup>4</sup> MC: Municipal Corporation

<sup>5</sup> Census Town (CT): CTs are complete settlement units that are classified as urban areas by the Registrar General of India (RGI), as part of the census operations, if they cross the threshold on three specific urban characteristics, viz, size (population of at least 5,000), density (at least 400 persons per square kilometer) and non-farm nature of workforce (at least 75% of male workforce in non-farm sector). However, settlements declared as CTs continue to be administered as rural areas.

Table no. 2.1

**District- Wise Rural Urban Population, Sikkim (1971-2011)**

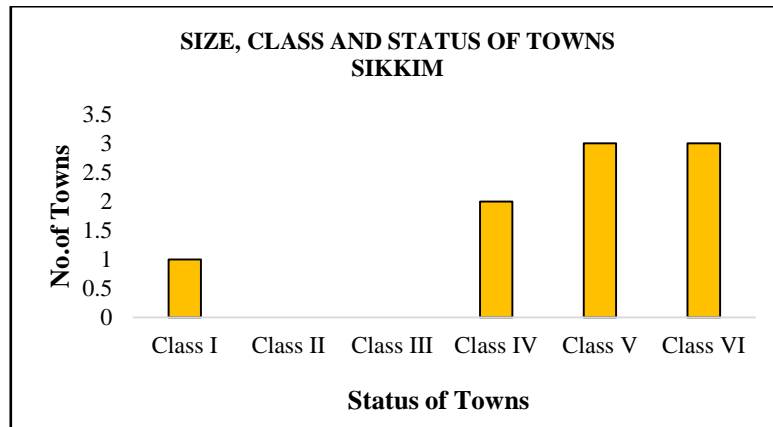
Year	North			West			South			East		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
1971	13014	12683	331	58023	56927	1096	53185	51963	1222	85621	68602	17019
1981	26455	25675	780	75192	73495	1697	75976	70611	5365	138762	95520	43242
1991	31240	30437	803	98161	96399	9762	98604	96035	2569	178452	146580	31872
2001	41030	39782	1248	123256	121432	1824	131525	127579	3946	245040	192188	52852
2011	43709	39065	4644	136435	131187	5248	146850	125651	21199	283583	161096	122487

Source: State at a Glance: Sikkim. Vol. 1(4), 2015.ENVIS Centre on Himalayan Ecology.

### 2.7.3 Class, Size and Status of Towns

The number of Census Town, Nagar Panchayat Town, Municipal Corporation, Municipal Councils and Notified Bazar Area in the state has been changing due to the addition of new Census Towns, conversion of Municipal Councils to Corporation and other changes in the status of various administrative areas. To peruse different comprehensive analysis, towns have been categorised into six classes by the number of populations. According to 2011 Census of India, Sikkim is having total nine towns, and only one class I town (100,000 and above population), namely, Gangtok (MC). Namchi Municipal Council and Rangpo Nagar Panchayat fall under class IV town (10,000 to 19,999 population), Singtam Nagar Panchayat, Jorethang Nagar Panchayat and Rhenock Census Towns fall in class V (5,000 to 9,999 population). Gyalsing Nagar Panchayat, Mangan Nagar Panchayat and Nayabazar Notified Bazar area fall under class VI (Less than 5,000 population).

Fig no. 2.8



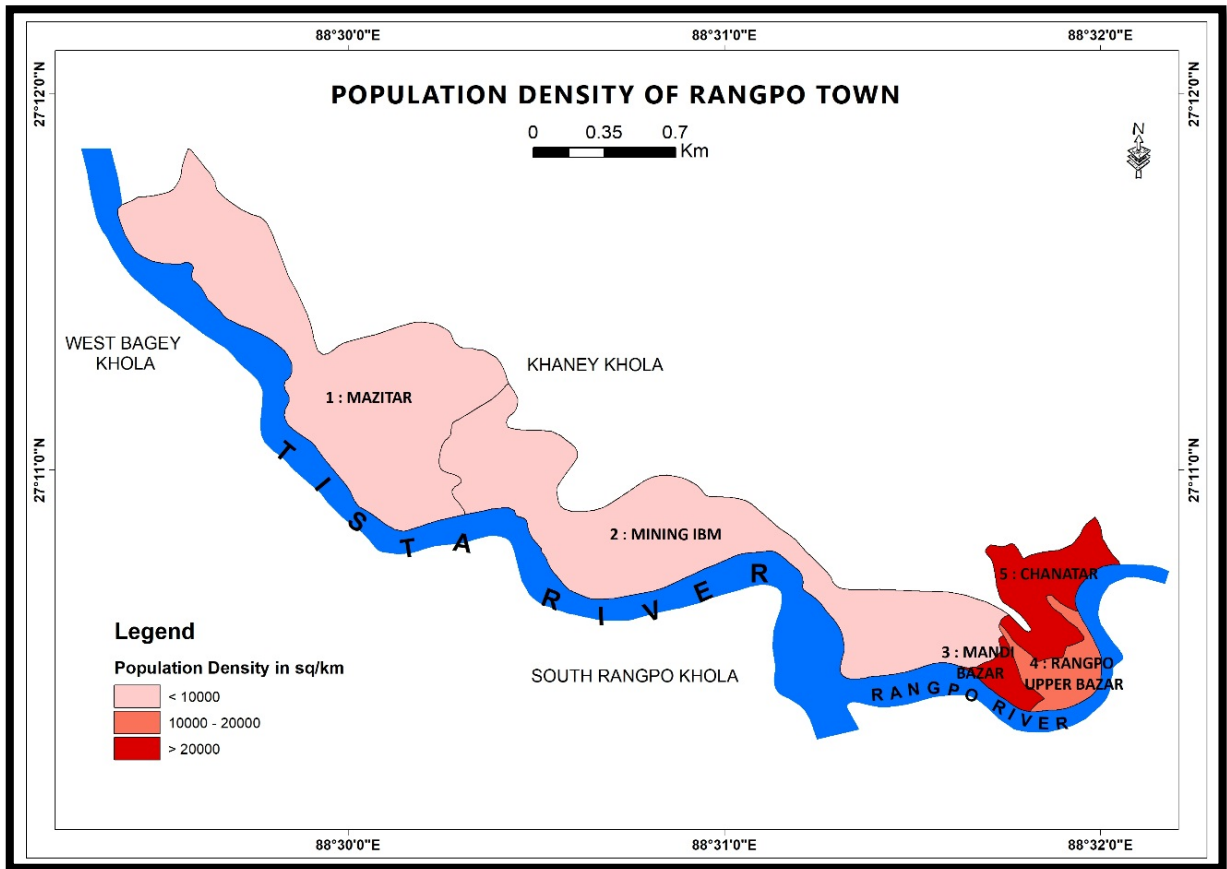
Source: District Census Handbook, Sikkim, 2011.XII-B, series-12,pp.xii.

## 2.8 Rangpo in its Demographic Frame

Rangpo (class IV, 2011 Census)<sup>6</sup> is a small Nagar Panchayat town, located in the East district of Sikkim. According to 1981 Census Rangpo was a class VI town. It is 40 km away from Gangtok city (capital) and roughly situated within 27°17'61'' North and 88°29'East to 88°32' East having total population of 10,450 (2011 Census).

<sup>6</sup> Class IV Town: The urban areas, comprising total number of population between 10,000 to 19,999 are denoted as class IV town. Census of India.2011, Sikkim.Series-12. Part XII-B. District Census Handbook.

Fig no. 2.9



Source: Rangpo Nagar Panchayat Office (2017).

Table no.2.2 **Population Density of Rangpo Town (2011)**

Wards	Population	Area (sq.km)	Density of population (per sq.km)
1.Mazitar	3172	0.800793	3961.07
2.Mining IBM	3084	0.810601	3804.58
3.Mandi Bazar	1020	0.028638	35617.01
4.Rangpo Upper bazar	1563	0.078278	19967.29
5. Chanatar	1611	0.075304	21393.28

Source: Nagar Panchayat Office (2017).

Rangpo is having five wards within its territory. Elevation of this town is 1,093 feet above the mean sea level. Teesta river and Rangpo river bound this town in the south, south-west and east respectively. The area of this town is 1.79 sq.km. having density of 5,838 persons/sq.km. Ward no. 3 (Mandi Bazar) is having highest density with 35,617.01 persons/sq.km. and ward no. 2 (Mining IBM) is least populous ward with density of 3,804.58 person/sq. km. The town has 2,505 households with 10,450 persons (2011 Census). Population has increased in the town by 181.75% in last decade (2001-2011).

Fig no. 2.10

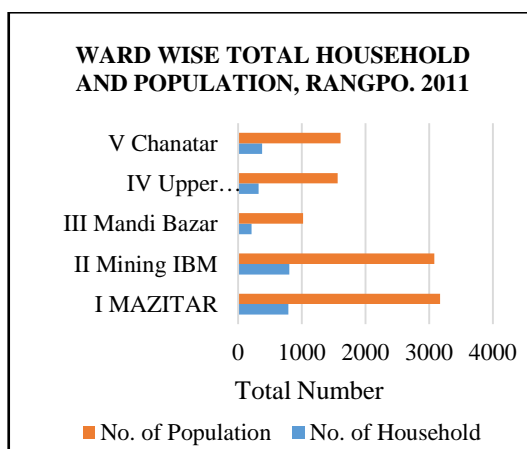
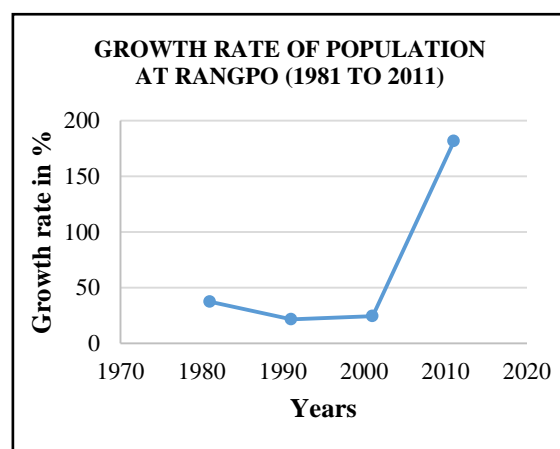


Fig no.2.11



**Source:** District Census Handbook. 2011. Sikkim. Series-12. Part XII-B and Statement-I.

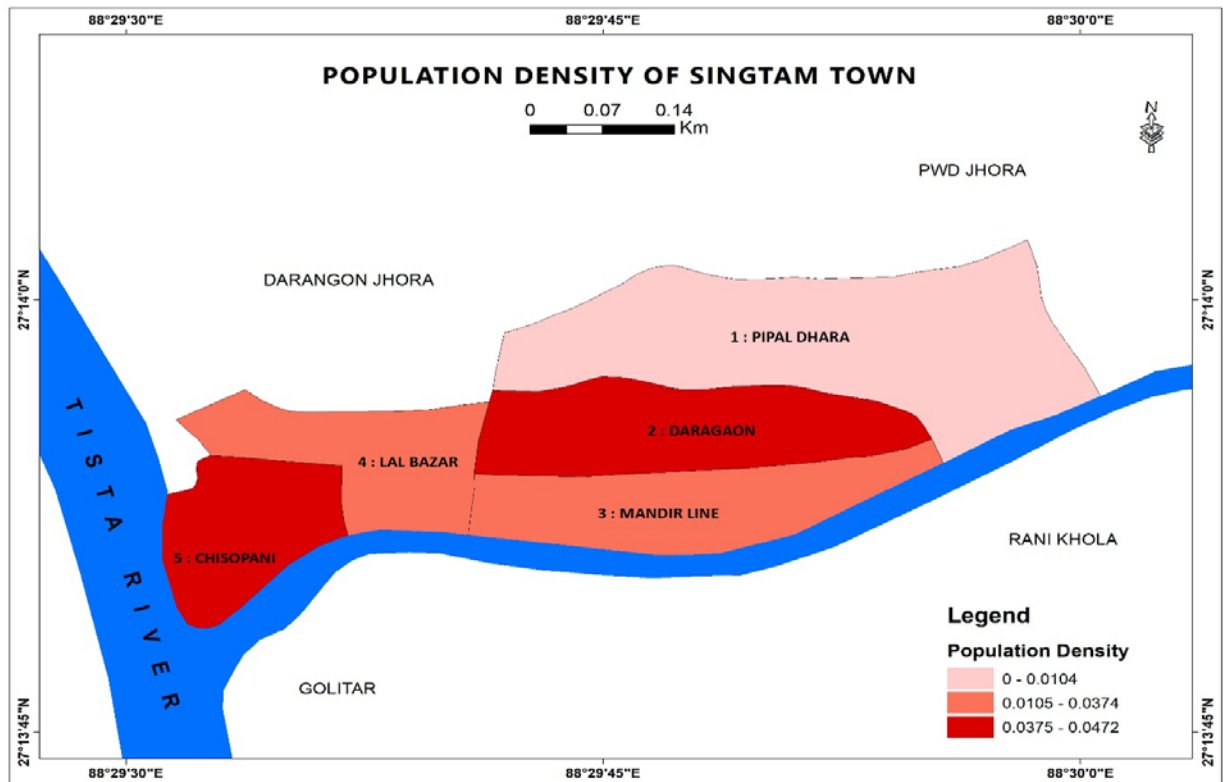
Growth of population signifies the growth of town in terms of its status and development. In 1981, total population of Rangpo was only 2,452 persons, which rose to 2,980 and 3,709 in 1991 and 2001 respectively. Fig no. 2.11 illustrates the numerical strength of population in Rangpo, ward-wise. Ward no. 1 Mazitar accounts for 30%, due to concentration of pharmaceutical industries and distilleries in this ward. Ward no 1 is also having second highest number of trade license holders, which proves commercial potentialities of this place. Second largest accumulation (29.51%) has been observed in ward no. 2 (Mining IBM). After becoming Nagar Panchayat town, Rangpo has experienced high pace of population growth. This growth is indicative of global expansion of capitalism in the town. It also reflects the development rate under the neoclassical perspective. Structural transformation of rural notified area into urban modern sector (Lewis 1954: 139-92) reflects the neoliberal developmental processes that encourage migration to fulfill the gap of potential labour market and increase in production (Nurkse, 1953). Data based (Census of India, 2011) economic activities show that the concentration of other worker is 97.23% in Rangpo town.

This ‘other workers’ include those who are working in some economic activities during last one year, but other than cultivators or agricultural labourers or household industry. In Rangpo, this accretion of ‘other worker’ testifies economic transformation of the town. Figure number 2.12 explains the decadal growth rate of Rangpo town – showing the maximum growth rate in last decade (181.7%, Census of India, 2011. Statement- I).

## 2.9 Singtam in its Demographic Frame

Singtam is also a small Nagar Panchayat town (class V, total population 5,868), located at 27°15' North and 88°38' East with an area of 0.18 km<sup>2</sup>. Singtam has five wards within its small territory. Rani Khola and river Teesta bound this town in the south and west respectively. Elevation of this area is 1,396 feet above the mean sea level. Decadal growth rate of population is 8.14% (Census of India, 2011). It is the smallest town in terms of area in the Gangtok sub-division. The density of this town is 32,600 person/sq. km. Ward no. 2 (Daragaon) and ward no. 5 (Chisopani) are most populous wards and ward no. 1 (Pipal Dhara) is the least populous ward.

Fig no. 2.12



Source: Nagar Panchayat Office, Singtam (2017).

Despite the diffusion of new economic ventures from small-medium industry including different tertiary jobs, Singtam was well known for the establishment of Distillation and liquors in 1955. Further, there has been a significant growth of job prospects and welfare amenities in urban areas, especially after the transformation of Singtam as Nagar Panchayat town in 2010. In the past (1981 Census) too this town experienced exceptionally high (109.92%) population growth when total population rose from 4,043 to 5,868 in 2011. However, the town recorded a significant drop in 1991 Census, due to anemic trade growth. After that India as a whole gets entry into neoliberal economics that puts the urban centers on the acceleration mode and Sikkim is not beyond that. Fig no. 2.14 shows the numerical strength of total number of household and population, based on 2011 Census. The maximum concentration of population has been identified in ward no. 5 (Chisopani) followed by ward no. 2 (Daragaon). On the other part, ward no. 1 (Pipal Dara) is sparsely populated.

Table no. 2.3 **Population Density of Singtam Town (2011)**

Wards	Population	Area in sq.km.	Population density/sq. km.
<b>1. Pipal Dhara</b>	688	0.062118101	11075.68
<b>2. Daragaon</b>	1398	0.030813967	45369.04
<b>3. Mandir line</b>	1246	0.034662809	35946.31
<b>4. Lal Bazar</b>	904	0.023153147	39044.37
<b>5. Chisopani</b>	1632	0.033578855	48602.01

Source: Nagar Panchayat Office Singtam. 2016-17.

Fig no. 2.13

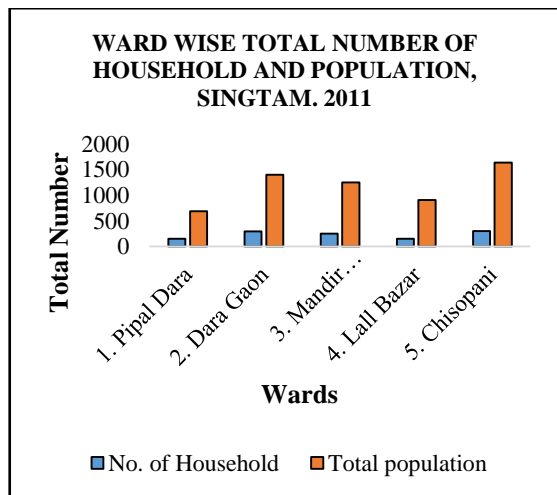
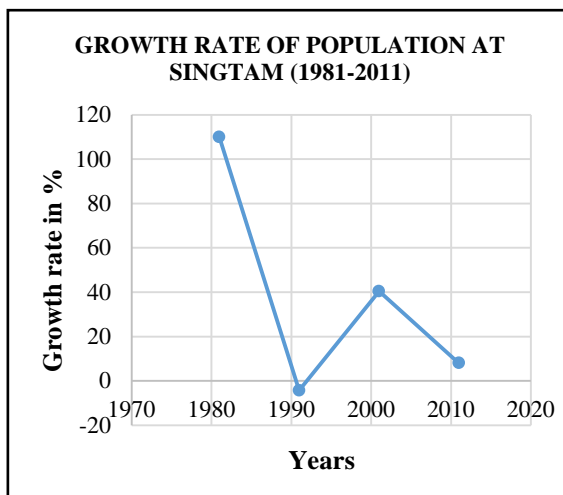
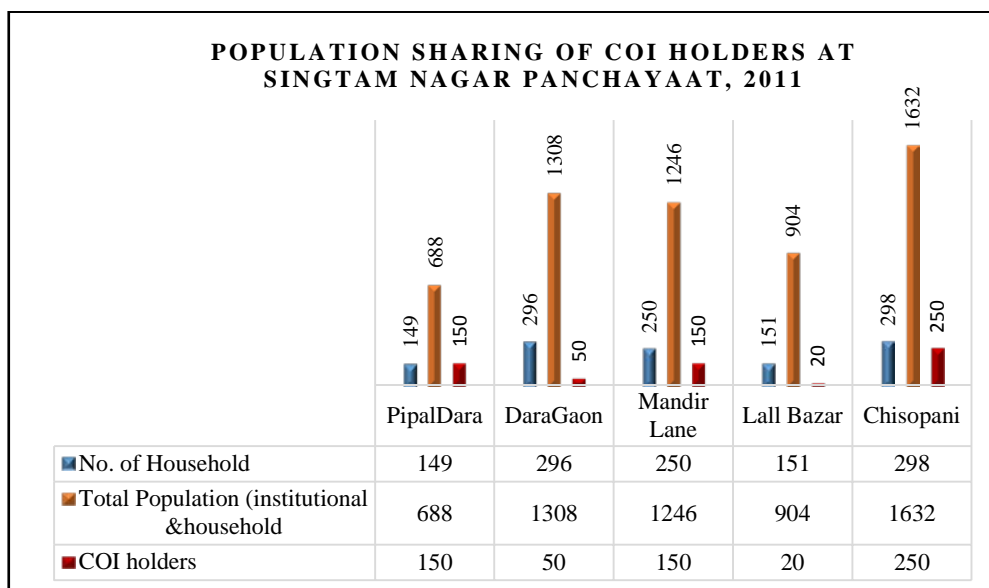


Fig no. 2.14



Source: Census of India. 2011, Sikkim. District Census Handbook, Series- 12 Part XII and Statement -1.

Fig no. 2.15



Source: Nagar Panchayat Office. Singtam, 2016.

Singtam Nagar Panchayat Office stated that in the town area under various wards the COI/Sikkim Subject holders are less in number than the migrant population. Chisopani, Mandir Lane and Pipal Dara are having more concentration of local population while Lalbazar has minimum Sikkimese population.

## **2.10 Why Rangpo and Singtam: Geographical Context**

I consider Rangpo and Singtam as vital places of research in Sikkim – a rapidly urbanising state in the eastern Himalayan region. Zèrah and Denis argue, “understanding the nature and form of ‘small town urbanism’ is imperative to unpacking the role of small urban settlements as an interface functioning at different scales, without trapping them in a dominant and hierarchical view of the world....” (Zèrah and Denis, 2017: 1-35). Amitabh Kundu also observes that small and medium towns exhibited rapid growth during eighties and nineties, these towns (mainly class V, class VI towns) are not going with the general pattern of growth like class I towns, rather they are experiencing higher growth rates.

Rangpo and Singtam (Nagar Panchayat town) provide a case of small town urbanisation with its own scale of various developments. Their geographical location has also accelerated the rate of urbanisation as well as their economic significance for the overall development of the state. Rangpo acts as a state border town, sharing the border with West Bengal, and Singtam acts as a junction town – well connected with the neighbouring states and rest of India, and also of the state itself. On the other side Singtam is an important transit point for legal and illegal goods crossing the state’s border and other parts of various districts. National Hydro Power Corporation Stage V project at Sirwani, Singtam also created large possibilities of construction and allied job opportunities in last decade (Statesman, NB plus. 17.04.08: 5) Thus, these towns occupy an extraordinary geo-spatial importance in Sikkim’s economy and polity, firmly controlled by Sikkim state’s Acts and Regulations, but are also stated to be in a grave situation in the production of transgression zone at the southern edge of the ‘model development (Chettri and Duncun. 2018). Other three important factors are also accelerating the pace of economic Sgrowth of the nation as a whole and Sikkim is not beyond this. India’s entry in neoliberal economy puts her into excel economic growth rate, especially after 90’s which has a reflection of emergent market condition. The advancement of transport facilities, rapid growth in information and communication technology and integrating China into WTO as an emergent market are these three controlling factors. These towns are not beyond these contemporary effects, which can place them into a perfect flexible and competitive market conditions.

## **2.11 Conclusions**

Migration has been controlled by spatial location since long. People are willing to migrate towards comfort zone. History has witnessed that people used to travel from mountain regions to plain regions for better livelihood options. Contemporary world also experienced reverse flow of migration – people are heading towards uncomfortable, extreme physical and climatic regions. This study is carrying the evidence of reverse trends of migration. Labourers are migrating from comfortable plain regions to different physical and climatic (apparently cold climate, rough relief and high altitude) region. This influx of population brings changes on the aerial (shape and size of the place), structural, functional and demographic context of the places.

Global changes in fertility and mortality (demographic transition) have had a great effect on entire population structure, relatively it has been considered that ‘mobility transition’ (Zelinsky, 1971) and ‘demographic dividend’ rather play the vital role in the present trends of labour flow. Zelinsky (1971:229) argued in this ‘mobility transition’ there have been “definite, patterned regularities in the growth of personal mobility through space-time during recent history, and these regularities comprise an essential component of the modernization process”.

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