

Problems encountered by ageing population in rural Nepal due to foreign migration

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Abstract

Migration plays major role in the process of change in the world that we are facing now, it affects on economy, demography, culture, religion, and state. Better communication, technologies, transportation, commodity leads to migration. Each day over 1000 youth of Nepal leave country for employment (Department of foreign employment, 2013). There is no doubt that foreign migration leads to increase remittance and has reduced poverty in Nepal from 42% in 1996 to 25.16% in 2012(Nepal Living Standard Survey 2012) but this is main cause of decline in fertility and family breakup too. Thus, how foreign migration becomes factor for causing ageing problem? Very little remittance has been brought into nation infrastructure development, due to increased income from remittance family tend to migrate to urban areas with their children for better life only old family member above 60 are mostly left in villages. Growth rate of annual elder population was 3.39 % during (1991-2001), now Nepal elderly population constitutes 9.1% of total population, among them 75.8% live in rural area (central bureau of statistics 2011). Elderly populations are increasing but they are deprived of getting proper care and support from family and government so they are suffering from physical and senile problem. They are also facing problem for sustaining agriculture .There are very few youth in rural area so even in funeral period it is difficult to collect people to carry dead body to certain place. This paper attempts to explore the effect of foreign migration in rural Nepal. The research questions have been answer through two data set archival source and 20 case studies in Pyarjung Village Development Committee (VDC) of Lamjung district conducted from February 12 to februrary28, 2015 to know their socio-economic condition. I have adopted migration theory to interact with finding at second stage of the interpretation. Thus I argue, remittance should be taken as forward step to make people self independent at individual and national level.

Keywords: ageing, migration, economy, remittance, funeral

Introduction

The main theme of this study is to explore direct relation between youth migration and its effects on the life and work of ageing People in Nepal. Ageing is natural and inevitable process but definition of ageing varies according to country in the context of Nepal people above 60 years of age are consider as senior citizen. According to 2001 census, Nepal elderly population constitute 6.1percent of total population of country during the year 1991-2001 the annual elderly population growth rate was 3.39 percent, in 2011 the population of elderly has increased to 9.1 percent (Chalise,2006) among total number of elderly 75.8% live in villages. Increased number of elderly has lead problem to family for their caring, and it is sure after some year elderly population will be high because 54.7% population is in age 15- 59, and this age people mostly are in abroad for different purpose, this played great role in changing the population growth rate from negative to positive (Sobotka, 2009) and (Strozza 2010).

In the present context the village is characterized with "youth less population and toothless population". Why youth are more likely to work in other countries? Youth mostly for the employment are going abroad for better opportunities. In the absence of youth in the family elderly people don't get support and care properly, on the other hand country lack energetic youth for the development. There is no doubt that foreign migration provides different opportunities for the people and GDP get higher which helps to reduce the poverty rate of the country. On the other hand foreign migration has some negative consequences too; decrease in fertility is main cause of foreign migration. In the absence of family member it is not possible to cultivate the land by elderly only so most of the land likes "Khet¹, Bari² is uncultivated. People don't show interest to work in field because they can find alternative and easy way of finding employment in abroad (Gautam, 2005). Due to this trend there is lesser chance for village development. Nowadays there is change in family structure too, due to this change from joint to nuclear family elderly role and decisions are not taken as important, secondly the number of elderly population are increasing but there is less number of family member to care for them . Thirdly it is hard to provide support, care, and time as per their demand because mortality rate is decreasing day by day and they have longer life span in comparison to the past and this is the main reason for causing serious health problem like depression and other chronic diseases.

Foreign Migration: Retrospect and Prospect

Migration in simple term is the process which is started from normal human civilization. Migration in the beginning is basically for the sake of food and livelihood, gradually concept get changed, now people migrate to other places for food, education and for achievement of other luxurious material and things. The history of foreign migration for employment begins in 1814- 1815 after the Nepal British Indian war. Migration of Nepalese for other employment begins to work in tea states of Darjeeling in 19th century. The reason behind migration is almost same in Nepal. There are many villages in Nepal where foreign migration has been established as culture of community to go abroad and to return back with certain amount of money. The influence of family, friend and relatives have played prominent role to the promotion of foreign migration. There are several types of migration; historically there are three forms of emigration 1) movement related to military recruitment, 2) movement for agricultural and other economic activities, 3) marriage migration (Subedi, 1991). Nowadays in Nepal foreign migration is rapidly increasing for the purpose of getting employment, higher education and for business purpose (KC, 2003). Foreign migration is one of the major causes to increase literacy and educational status. Low caste and lower caste people reported that they have good treatment from higher caste and upper class people it is because they have cash money which is one of the main factors that leads to rapid foreign migration (Constant, Amelia). Due to massive migration youth are decreasing day by day mostly senior citizen are seen in the villages nowadays, so it is difficult for them to survive their life in dignified way because there is nobody to listen their feeling and problem. Most of them are unable to continue their farming in proper way due to natural ageing process which is the main reason of decreasing Nepal productivity rate and Nepal has to depend on other countries it means local level production is decreasing day by day due to absence of youth in the villages. Social relation is becoming weaker because both poor and richer are migrated to other countries for their income.

Nepal is known as agricultural country, in the past more than 80 percent people used to actively engaged in agriculture (Seddon, 1998) but now only forty percent of GDP come from agriculture other basically come from non agriculture sector. Large proportion of people in village depends on remittance, family member who are in Nepal don't show interest to do other work they only rely on remittance. It means people are so dependent with those who are in abroad. So value of foreign labor migration is increasing day by day. Most of the youth show interest to go to abroad. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Dubai, Malaysia, Hongkong, South Korea in east and south East Asia are main countries where Nepalese youth mostly go for income.

Due to political instability youth are displaced to different places for the sake of opportunities and in the absence of youth it is hard for the family member to carry dead body to certain places, mostly in the village daughter in law prefer to go to urban areas for the betterment of their children education and senior citizen are left in village, most of the village of our country are felt with senior citizen there is no proper hospital and people to

care for them so government have to show concern on it. It is better to create opportunities in our own countries so all will get benefit.

Physical, Social and economic support for elderly People

Physical support is necessary for elderly when they are ill and don't able to function well it is only possible in the presence of family member. In the context of Nepal family system is changed in the previous days people tend to live in joint family, elderly people used to be in head position their decision were accepted, they got lots of love and caring from two generation of family but nowadays everybody prefer nuclear family, elderly people have got little role in family, elderly in most of cases have to live separately and have to manage their life by themselves. Economic support comes from pension and insurance in the context of Nepal only less than 7% of elderly are benefitted from the pension system and as old age allowances Government gives only Five hundred Rs which is equivalent to 5 \$ per month for above 60 years of people. In 2015 government made declaration to give 10\$ per month for the elderly above 60 and it is also not sufficient for them. It shows that majority of elderly have to depend on family for their survival. It is hard for their son to provide better care and facility to them and to their children. Most of the family in the present context is depending on remittance so it is hard for them to manage everything through that money that their son and other family members send to them; this is the main reason that remittance is not sufficient for nation infrastructure development because in Nepal minimum of 5 member of one family depend only on single people. Mostly remittance is spending on child education, easy life style and other family purposes.

The Field and Methods

The field work was conducted from February 12 to February 28, 2015 in Pyarjung VDC, Lamjung district. Based on qualitative multi-methods approach, data and information were collected employing following techniques; a) personal case study, & b) focus group discussion. Rapport was build up with old age people by making personal home visit and making informal discussion with them. There were altogether 450 households in the VDC but data and required information were obtained from 20 case studies through snow ball approach.

Migration theory

Migration is too diverse and there is various type of it so it is very difficult to explain it from single theory. Highly skilled migration, retirement migration, population displaced by climate change and other disaster events are some types of migration. Here in the paper I have follow push and pull theory of migration which attempt to describe cause and recent types of migration in the context of Nepal (Arango, 2004). Poverty, unemployment, landlessness, rapid population is major push factor in Nepal to overcome from this problem people choose place where there is better facility of education, welfare systems, good environmental and living conditions which is consider as pull factors (Righard, 2013)

.Government of Nepal still lack providing better opportunities for youth so youth are fascinated to go to other countries where they get proper facilities.

Respondents view on foreign migration and its effect to them

There is different view of respondents regarding effect of foreign migration to them which have been summarized as follows:

1. Provides job opportunity which helps to get better life and education for grandchild and other family members.
2. It is their compulsion to go to abroad for the income because it is very hard to find a job in Nepal.
3. Due to foreign migration for employment it is very hard to meet family member in time of need too.
4. Due to youth less population there is reduction in agriculture of the country.
5. Foreign migration is main source of income in very family.
6. Rapid foreign migration leads country more backward and future generation will face more problems.

To get more clear idea about the effect of foreign six cases have been selected and presented in this section of paper. Respondents give me consent to present their name in this paper.

Case 1: Ruchee Gurung

To understand actual situation of elderly people whose son are abroad I asked them a question, do you like to see your son working in abroad or in Nepal? What are the effect of it for the family and you? First of all he looked at me surprisingly but later due to effective communication he convinced to narrate his story. I had faced lots of difficulty in raising my children where there are no proper facility to maintain the life style. I have got three son when they grown up they become weak on their study because most of time they should have to be busy on household work. There is no facility of job in Village and it is hard to find job in urban area too so they planned to go to abroad two of my son are in abroad now and one is in Kathmandu with his family. Other two of my son family are in urban area with my grand children for their education now I am alone in my home I need to take care of my home there is nobody to take care of me, sometime I feel isolated because I don't find a chance to share my feeling with my family member. I have to do all my household work in the age of 67 they only come at Dashain festival, our almost land is barren, daughter in law don't show interest to work in land they prefer to live in city area, most of money my son earn are spend on household activity not for long term purpose, I am happy that my son are in abroad because they earn money but the money are not use for

long term purpose so sometime I get worried that what will they do when my son return back to Nepal.

Case 2: Doma Gurung

I am 70 years old, now I am with my husband who is in his age 76. I have 2 son and 1 daughter but now in this age there is no one with us. Daughter is busy on her home and two of my son is in abroad because it is very hard to survive the life that they earn by doing different farming work in village. Two of my son is married, daughter in law with her children are in city area for easy life and for education of their children, here in village there is no private school. sometime we feel that we will be happy if some of them are with us, in the absence of them we elderly have to manage all the things, all land are barren there is nobody to share our anxiety, tension except with my husband. It is also our compulsion to send our children to abroad because there is no proper job facility, we are poor and we have to manage our life so sometime we husband and wife feel satisfied with our children too, they have bought small pieces of land in urban area we hope next time they will make house and will bring us in new house.

Case 3: Reena Gurung

I am Reena in my age 67. I am alone in my home, my husband died before 10 years ago, I have 2 son and 2 daughter but all of them are busy on their work, we are poor and my son didn't find opportunity to read well so they are in abroad for their income, two of my son are unmarried they are not so eager to marriage because it will be more hard for them to maintain the life. They have made a planned that after buying some land they are going to marry. My son bought me buffalo and goat and I am busy on caring them but unfortunately I am alone in my home

Case 4: Dhan Bahadur Gurung

My name is Dhan Bahadur Gurung and I am 66 years old and she is my beautiful wife Ful Maya. I married her when she was 14 now we have four sons and one daughter. We are not so rich to send our children to better school so our children grown up in this village we used to cultivate the land in seasonal period. Slowly after they become mature they don't able to compete with other in education because our children don't get proper time for their education most of the time they should have to busy on farming, so for them abroad is best option for the employment, now some are in European countries some in African countries, all of them doing their best to provide better facility to their family , two of my son are married, daughter in law are in urban areas, but they married in late age and one of my son don't show interest to marry even in his age 25 if he married it will be more difficult for him to manage the family. Sometime my daughter in law used to call us but we love to live in this village, sometime we feel frustrate because of state negligence and hat off for other countries who provide many youth different opportunities in their abroad. There is nobody to care for us in this old age two are the supporter of each other and sometime it is hard for

us to survive life because there is no enough allowances and sometime son quarrel with each other to send money in behalf of us.

Case 5: Hira Gurung

My name is Hira Gurung, I am 73 years old she is Jau maya my wife .She is the main supporter of mine in this age she (smile). I have five daughter and one son, all my daughter are married and son is in abroad for income and my daughter in law with one child is with us. It has been three years but my son doesn't return back to home, daughter in law don't show interest to talk with us because she has to take care of us and her children too and most of the time she is busy on her work. Some of my daughter only comes once in month but return back to their home. We know it is hard for my daughter in law to manage everything. Financially we are not so poor I am pensioner and it is enough for we too survive the life, so daughter in law loves us. When our son was with us we used to be happier. Daughter in law also get support from her husband, no land used to be barren but now most of the land are barren because it is enough to maintain family that my son spend sto us and I have got the pension too. Now we are old and can't do hard work sometime I feel very frustrated thinking that I will die without seeing my son. But I am happy with my family.

Case 6: Pashupati Ghale and Maya Ghale

I am 65 years old man; she is my wife Maya. I am x Indian army, and my two son are in Europe with their family and my daughter is in urban area with her husband. All my children are well educated so their life is well settle, we have kept house keeper with us who support us and we share our problem with her she is very supportive, once in year mostly our son come to village for the visit so we don't feel frustration, everything is well managed, we cultivate all our land with help of laborer, we have buffalo and goat too. I feel very proud with myself and with my family because all of them are well settled.

Generalizations drawn from the above mentioned case studies:

These six cases have different views on foreign migration due to different situation. In First and second cases due to poverty their son are migrated to abroad and their family are fascinated towards attractive life in urban areas, elderly people are left in village because it will be hard for them to take care for them so they have to manage their life in village by themselves.

In third and fourth cases their son don't show interest to marry even in the age of 25, previously people used to marriage in the age of 18 or 20 but now due to education and due to different facility people don't show interest to marry in early age. So in village elderly people have faced difficulty in taking support from other family member.

In fifth and six cases elderly people are pensioners they are financially strong so they get back up support from their family members, even they manage to cultivate land with the help of other villager, they don't have much serious problem in comparison to previous

four cases, most of people came to visit them and they can also visit some new places with their family members so they are happy even their son are in abroad because their family are well settled enough.

Due to family environment there is different situation and problem in different family. I have found that yes foreign migration is very good which has increased remittance in our country Nepal, but it has some effect for the future generation too. Most of the youth don't show interest to live in Village and our country. Nepal is surrounded with village, mostly we can see elderly people in village area, then it is very hard to cultivate the land and there will be problem of food too. Most of them don't show interest to marry even after age of 25 because of responsibility that they have to fulfill after marriage, due to this reason youth population in Nepal after some years will be less and elderly will be more and it will be hard for youth to care for two generation elderly. Elderly who have pension have good life and their family are also good in comparison to other but if it is not possible that everyone will be pensioner, one who is financially sound have manage agriculture land too with the help of other people in village. Youth people who are in abroad are also facing problem like lack of social security, poor working conditions and lower wages and higher expenses of living.

Need for old age people friendly policies and strategies

Nepal government made strong policy and plan to promote foreign migration which is one of major source of economy in the nation so government established labor commission and labor tribunal, labor agreement to work in different countries, productive use of remittance for the purpose of nation development (Limbu, 2011). Foreign employment act was announced in 2007 after that period migration is increasing, in spite of creating opportunity in own countries state is promoting more on foreign migration, due to this lots of problem in state is emerging. State doesn't give more concern to those who returned back to Nepal, it is the country responsibility to make effective environment so that migrated can do some development work for nation which help to make the country economy strong. The government should give all possible incentive to encourage official transfer of remittance. Excessive use of remittance in family purpose create problem to senior citizen too. There is no proper policy for elderly people too. Social security for elderly is very weak they haven't got proper care allowances too it is because Nepal's program for senior citizen is guided by welfare approach rather than a right based conception so it need to be addressed .

Conclusion

Ageing is natural process and people need support and care during their old age. Nowadays due to development of technology, better facility in health and proper education system elderly people are increasing but the population to support for them is very less in comparison to past the main reason of it is due to foreign migration. Foreign migration helps to reduce poverty, decrease unemployment, and increase GDP rate of state members. But due to rapid foreign migration there is change in socio cultural value; change in family structure from joint to nuclear, barren land is increasing. 80 % of our country cover with villages and mostly elderly people are now in villages other family member are in urban area for different purpose, due to this there is reduction in local agriculture. In the absence of family member elderly people are deprived of getting social and emotional support. Government should make such environment so that that youth can able to use the knowledge that they gain from other countries. This process helps to create job opportunities and country also get benefit, this helps to develop better facilities for the youth too. Government also need to concern on using youth in own country.

Notes

¹ Upland (lots of water in rainy season and cold frost in winter season)

² Lowland (heavy rainfall, cold in winter, and hot during the summer)

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