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## **Nepali Migration to West Bengal**

### **Introduction**

BIRTHS and deaths are sharply defined and easily recognized vital events of human life but migration is not. The span of human mobility is broad, ranging from permanent emigration to a foreign country, to a move to nearby city, to daily continue to work (Paterson 1958).

Researchers distinguish migration from other kinds of mobility on the basis of arbitrary standards of duration and distance (United Nations 1970). Distance is not usually measured directly. Instead it often is defined by the crossing of an administrative or political boundary.

The study of Nepali migrants in India, in general, and in West Bengal, in particular, is a formidable task. The size and diversity of the origin and destination, the paucity of information, and the differences and deficiency of available data pose problem to make indepth study.

There is no significant physical demarcation of boundaries between Nepal and India, in general, and Nepal and West Bengal, in particular. The boundaries are created by inflow and outflow of people, conquest of invader and with the changes of political background for a long time. Nepal never was a colony of British but it was influenced profoundly by British through recruitment of soldiers for British and Indian armies.

Because of definitions of migration being both arbitrary and political, migration statistics from different countries or sources are not strictly comparable (Kelly and Elwell 1982). Even data from a series of censuses within the country may not be comparable, e.g., for India these definitions have been changed (Chatterjee and Bose 1977).

In this study we discuss saptial variation, sex ratio, economic activities and some estimations of Nepali migrants in West Bengal using mainly 1951-81 censuses. We would have liked to utilize the most recent census data, but the detailed information are either not given (as in 1981) or census volumes on migration not yet published (as in 1991).

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### Spatial Distribution of Migrants Across Districts

Nepali migrants in-West Bengal tend to cluster in some specific districts of West Bengal due to some socio-economic reasons. These spatial variation can be easily identified from Table 1. Both 1961 and 1971 census data reveal that Nepalese coming to West Bengal are concentrated mainly in Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Calcutta and urban areas of 24 Parganas. Darjeeling experiences the presence of largest number of Nepalese both in rural and urban areas compared to other districts of West Bengal. In urban areas of Jalpaiguri district, however, the existence of Nepalese is very low. Volume of Nepali migration to other districts is insignificant.

The existence of large volume of Nepalese, mainly in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts, may be explained in the following way:

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF NEPALI MIGRANTS ACROSS THE DISTRICTS OF WEST BENGAL  
BY RESIDENCE: 1961 AND 1971

(Place of birth: Nepal)

Place of enumeration (WB/Districts)	Nepali migrant					
	Total		Rural		Urban	
	1961	1971	1961	1971	1961	1971
West Bengal	100.00 (109190)	100.00 (100365)	100.00 (74229)	100.00 (77991)	100.00 (34961)	100.00 (22374)
Darjeeling	37.65	37.00	43.36	42.96	25.52	16.24
Jalpaiguri	34.93	38.62	50.46	48.99	1.97	2.50
Cooch Bihar	0.71	1.01	0.66	0.90	0.82	1.36
West Dinajpur	0.68	0.86	0.42	0.76	1.24	1.21
Malda	0.19	0.35	0.19	0.37	0.18	0.27
Murshidabad	0.15	0.17	0.07	0.09	0.32	0.47
Nadia	0.39	0.46	0.30	0.33	0.55	0.92
24-Parganas Howrah	4.54	3.93	0.53	0.68	13.05	15.24
	3.24	1.92	0.52	0.53	8.99	6.77
Calcutta	10.27	8.39	—	—	32.08	37.63
Hooghly Burdwan	1.43	1.07	0.41	0.44	3.57	3.26
	3.48	4.20	1.91	2.63	6.81	9.68
Birbhum	1.07	0.27	0.17	0.26	2.97	0.31
Bankura	0.23	0.18	0.12	0.11	0.49	0.40
Midnapore Purulia	0.70 0.34	1.15 0.42	0.63 0.24	0.69 0.26	0.86 0.57	2.73 1.01

Sources: Census of India, 1971, West Bengal Migration Table, Part II D(i), Table D IV to D V.  
Census of India, 1961, Vol XVI, West Bengal and Sikkim Part II C(ii), Migration Table D I - D III.

Notes: 1. Dash (—) indicates no data.  
2. The figures in brackets are total migrants.

Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri are somewhat adjacent to Nepal. Cost of migration is less compared to migration to other remote areas. Many studies show that distance deters migration (Dasgupta and Laishley 1975). Examination of these data on Nepali migrants in West Bengal reveals that distance often accounts for much variation in migration. People are more likely to migrate short distances than a long distance as it costs less and they know much information about the inherent opportunities of nearby places (Gardner 1981). This is specially true of low income and less educated migrants (Ritchey 1976), as is the case for Nepalese. In addition, long distance travel is often hazardous, and far away places differ far more from home. The distance represents psychological, financial and non-financial cost for the Nepali migrants. Therefore, it is very economical for Nepalese to migrate to Darjeeling.

Potential migrants base their decision to migrate on information of neighbouring places. Nepalese get easy information regarding the existence of large tea gardens in Darjeeling where they can derive their livelihood easily. They rely heavily on their relatives and friends living in Darjeeling for information about probable employment or trade opportunities. This very fact attracts Nepalese to Darjeeling. Conversely, it is also true that they are unlikely to move to places that they know very little. Because of these reasons, we find very negligible proportion of Nepalese in other districts of West Bengal except Calcutta.

In spite of being remote area from Nepal, Calcutta absorbed 32 per cent and 38 per cent Nepalese in urban areas in 1961 and 1971 respectively. The main reasons are:

- (a) Calcutta is the nerve centre of Eastern India. The entire economy revolves round this nucleus—the administrative, commercial and cultural centre of the region. From demographic point of view a metropolitan city is one whose population is more than one million, and Calcutta had crossed that mark as early as in 1921. According to 1991 census, the metropolitan Calcutta accommodates 10.9 million people. Economic opportunity in terms of job opportunity had worked as pull factor for Nepali migration. In developing countries about 40 percent of all urban growth is caused by in migration and reclassification and 60 per cent is caused by natural increase of current city dwellers (United Nations 1980).
- (b) Besides, improvement in communication facilities with Calcutta, has reduced the cost of migration and weakened the deterrent effect of distance. So reduced cost of migration attracts Nepalese to migrate to Calcutta.
- (c) The mass media may also be responsible for large Nepali migration to Calcutta.
- (d) The existence of a large informal sector in Calcutta did provide job opportunities for less educated Nepalese to work as portar, watchman, night guard etc.

It appears that there has been a general tendency of female migrants to be more biased towards short distance movements than males. The long distance movements are mostly shared by males. Calcutta being far away from Nepal, number of female migrants is less than males.

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TABLE 2: SEX RATIO OF NEPALI MIGRANTS IN WEST BENGAL: 1961 AND 1971

(Place of birth: Nepal)

State/District	1971			1961		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
West Bengal	633	719	399	593	743	349
Jalpaiguri Division (JD)	742	759	529		no J. D. in 1961	
Darjeeling	754	780	544	762	821	577
Jalpaiguri	749	753	514	756	765	367
Cooch Bihar	390	340	525	130	94	197
West Dinajpur	638	735	459	210	321	142
Malda	458	526	200	226	346	16
Presidency Division	309	233	316	643	769	378
Murshidabad	750	750	750	175	300	124
Nadia	368	238	577	216	157	295
24-Parganas	358	104	409	318	121	338
Howrah	415	367	429	215	369	198
Calcutta	256	—	256	287	—	287
Burdwan Division	402	290	517	270	286	265
Hooghly	321	308	328	505	216	599
Burdwan	433	281	616	309	290	320
Birbhum	286	429	—	47	225	29
Bankura	125	125	125	134	125	139
Midnapore	446	385	506	384	394	370
Purulia	417	111	875	357	106	707

Sources: Census of India 1971, Series 23, West Bengal *Migration Table*, Part II D(i), Table DI to DV.

Census of India 1961, Vol. XVI, West Bengal and Sikkim, Part II C(ii), *Migration Table* DI - D III.

Sex ratio = F/M x 10<sup>3</sup>

### Sex Ratio of Migrants

Sex ratio, defined in number of females per 1,000 males, may indicate the extent of sex selectivity in the migration process. In general more males than females had migrated to West Bengal from Nepal. Thus, 593 and 633 female migrants per thousand male migrants moved to West Bengal as per 1961 census and 1971 census respectively (Table 2). Rural-urban break down of sex ratio reveals that about 719 and 399 females per thousand male Nepalese moved to rural and urban West Bengal respectively as per 1971 census. 1961 census report shows sex ratios of 743 and 349 in rural and urban West Bengal. An examination of sex ratio of Nepali migrants by districts reveals the settlement pattern of males and females. While males,

though in small proportions, had migrated to different districts, the distribution of females is very low indeed in such areas. It stems from the rural-urban breakdown of sex ratio that there exists area selectivity of sex. As mentioned earlier, females have distinct rural bias. Generally costs and benefits are reflected in the process of migration. The motivation and patterns of migration are related to age, sex, education and ethnicity. We have, however, no data, except sex ratio of Nepalese, to establish this. In Africa and much of Asia most migrants are men, in Latin America and parts of East Asia, women predominate. In our earlier study (Data 1990) of Nepali migrants in India, we have seen preponderance of female migrants in Bihar. Sex ratios appear to be higher in the nearby districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar, and West Dinajpur than others, less closer to Nepal. As a matter of fact, the movement of female Nepalese may be considered mostly as marriage migration.

### **Economic Activities of Nepali Migrants**

Some demographic aspects of Nepali migrants in West Bengal were discussed. Limited information relating to economic activity of Nepalese in West Bengal are also available from censuses of 1961 and 1971. A valid comparison of economically active Nepali migrants to West Bengal between these periods is not possible because migration statistics are based on 'place of birth' in 1961 and 'place of last residence' in 1971 census. We, however, consider both types of statistics on migrant workers whose place of birth or place of last residence were reported to be Nepal. From data on total migrants and migrant workers we could calculate participation rate of migrants. The type of economic activity that a migrant performs may be looked at from the point of view of industry or activity of the establishment in which the economically active person is engaged. It is more convenient and customary to classify labour by three major industrial sectors which together comprise the economy. Three major industrial sectors are primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary sector comprises (i) cultivator, (ii) agricultural labourer, (iii) livestock, forestry etc., (iv) mining and quarrying. Secondary sector includes (i) household industry; (ii) manufacturing other than household industry, (iii) construction. The tertiary sector consists of (i) trade and commerce, (ii) transport, storage and communication and (iii) other services.

As seen from Table 3, about 79 per cent of the male migrants, born in Nepal, were workers, as observed in West Bengal in 1961 census count. Compared to this, only 62 per cent of the male migrants, whose place of last residence was Nepal, were recorded as workers in 1971. A decrease in the proportion of workers to the tune of 17 per cent cannot possibly be explained only by the difference in the concepts of place of birth and place of last residence statistics. In both periods, however, the male Nepali migration was, by and large, due to economic reasons. As observed earlier, about 70-75 per cent of such migrants had settled in the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. The major reasons seem to be their climatic suitability and job opportunities in the tea gardens in the region. The Nepalese had shown much preference to work in primary sector like that in the tea gardens. It is also true that in the industrial districts of Calcutta, Howrah and 24-Parganas, a considerable number of these migrants took up work in the secondary sector.

### Motivation for Migration: Push-pull Factors

It appears that economic opportunities in terms of job availabilities in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of West Bengal worked as pull factor for the Nepalese. Such a pull factor has been strengthened by push factor also, which arises due to low level of economic development in Nepal, and has possibly caused Nepali migration to India.

TABLE 3: PARTICIPATION RATE OF NEPALI MALE MIGRANTS TO WEST BENGAL BY DISTRICTS

(Place of birth : Nepal : 1961; Place of last residence : Nepal : 1971)

Place of enumeration State/district	Percentage of male migrant workers		1961			1971		
	1961	1971	Percentage of workers in sectors*			Percentage of workers in sectors*		
			Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
West Bengal	79.3	62.2	46.9	13.1	40.0	41.7	13.0	45.3
Darjeeling	79.4	57.5	57.6	5.8	36.6	54.5	4.8	40.7
Jalpaiguri	83.1	49.0	76.9	3.0	20.1	75.6	4.7	19.7
Cooch Bihar	86.4	91.1	33.6	3.5	62.9	19.4	12.5	68.1
West Dinajpur	60.1	57.0	21.8	5.9	72.3	1.9	30.2	67.9
Malda	78.6	67.3	18.2	16.7	65.1	—	—	100.0
Murshidabad	63.5	85.0	1.0	46.0	53.0	—	70.6	29.4
Nadia	85.0	86.8	2.7	19.0	78.3	—	24.1	75.9
24-Parganas	69.4	86.3	2.2	42.9	54.9	0.8	40.4	58.8
Calcutta	81.9	77.1	0.1	21.3	78.6	0.9	22.0	77.1
Howrah	72.4	89.7	0.1	47.7	52.2	0.5	44.2	55.3
Hooghly	85.7	91.5	1.6	61.6	36.8	3.6	44.3	52.1
Burdwan	77.7	80.1	18.4	42.9	38.7	21.8	20.9	57.3
Birbhum	30.2	92.9	13.7	19.0	67.3	25.7	2.5	71.8
Bankura	96.0	76.5	2.4	16.8	80.8	—	—	100.0
Midnapore	80.7	84.4	4.3	8.7	87.0	7.2	17.1	75.7
Purulia	88.4	100.0	13.9	23.2	62.9	—	—	100.0

Sources : See Table 1.

\* For explanation, see text.

Nepal is predominantly an agricultural economy. The agricultural sector employs about 90 per cent of the country's labour force and contributes to nearly 68 per cent of the gross domestic product (United Nations 1980). In recent past, the performance of agricultural sector has been poor for several reasons:

- (i) the terraced slopes of the hill, where crops were used to be grown earlier, are now inhabited by a bulk of Nepalese;
- (ii) shortage of agricultural credit and lack of improved fertilizers create handicap for agricultural development.

Between 1960 and 1970 food grain increased by only 1 per cent, being about half the rate of increase of population. This has resulted in reduction of per capita availability of food. Besides, low income associated with agricultural underemployment (ILO 1974) and high population growth led to a reduced per capita income.

The industrial sector is also not well developed. Besides lack of infrastructural facilities, raw materials and modern technology, its development is constrained by limited internal market.

During 1952 to 1971, population increased by almost 3.3 million, about 1.2 million in the first nine years and 2.1 million in the next ten years. The annual growth rate of population was 1.7 percent during 1952-54 to 1961, which increased to 2.1 percent during 1961-71.

The high density of population and its growth in Nepal imply continual pressure of population on land. These very basic features of underdevelopment of Nepal's economy pushed the Nepalese out of their origin and attracted to the states of India, which were more adjacent to Nepal and offered much more economic opportunities compared to Nepal.

Higher fertility, lower literacy and expectation of life at birth, higher density and greater share of state domestic product in the primary sector in Nepal compared to West Bengal pinpoint that unfavourable socio-demographic and econo-demographic condition exists in Nepal.

It will also be interesting to provide a comparative picture of economically active population of Nepal and Nepali migrants in West Bengal (Table 4).

TABLE 4: COMPARISON OF ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE MALE POPULATION OF NEPAL AND MALE NEPALI MIGRANTS IN WEST BENGAL

Sector <sup>0</sup>	(per cent distribution across sectors)					
	1952-54		1961		1971	
	% of working population of Nepal	% of Nepali migrant worker in West Bengal	% of working population of Nepal	% of Nepali migrant worker in West Bengal	% of working population of Nepal	% of Nepali migrant worker in West Bengal
Primary	93.5	n.a.	93.8	46.9	94.4	41.7
Secondary	2.1	n.a.	2.0	13.1	1.2	13.0
Tertiary	4.2	n.a.	3.4	40.07	4.4	45.3
Participation rate	57.1	n.a.	55.3	9.2	51.9	62.2

n.a.— not available.

<sup>a</sup>— unspecified category not shown.

An examination of the data reveals that "Nepal's economy was not able, during a period of almost twenty years, to bring changes in the functional distribution of labour force. Primary sector has prevailed to be labour intensive, while secondary sector, consisting mainly of cottage industry and a small size mechanized consumer's industry with very limited workers' absorbing capacity, has not yet sufficiently developed to cover the expanding needs of the population for consumer's goods" (CBS, Kathmandu 1977). But the situation is reversed for Nepali migrant workers in West Bengal. Not only primary sector, particularly the tea industry, but also tertiary sector played a prominent role in absorbing Nepali migrant labour. Primary and tertiary sector, more or less, take equal share in employing them. Whereas secondary sector in Nepal has absorption capacity of 1 per cent to 2 per cent labour force, the same sector in West Bengal absorbs 13 per cent Nepali migrant labour as per 1961 and 1971 censuses. Further, the participation rate has also been higher for Nepali migrants in the State than for the Nepalese in Nepal.

### Some Estimates of Nepali Migrants

#### *Inter-censal Migration*

Of the migrants born in countries other than India, only 2 per cent are from Nepal as compared to 97 per cent from Bangladesh to West-Bengal as per 1981 Census. The average duration (years) of residence in West Bengal of this small proportion of Nepali Migrants, shown below, indicate approximately the mean timings of their arrivals:

<i>Year of Observation</i>	<i>Average duration (years) of residence</i>			
	<i>Rural</i>		<i>Urban</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
1961	10.9	11.2	8.6	8.6
1971	14.2	13.5	12.2	12.2
1981	20.5	19.4	15.3	14.6

An examination of the duration of stay of Nepali migrants in West Bengal indicates that the majority of them had settled several years earlier in rural areas than in towns and cities. The principal occupational background of these migrants, being in the agricultural sector, supports this settlement pattern. There is, however, not much sex differential in the average duration of residence, implying but not establishing the movement of entire families in most of the cases.

An assessment of the volume of migration in each decade present an interesting picture. During each decade in the period 1941-81, more or less 1,00,000 Nepalis had migrated to West Bengal. Relative to resident population of the State, the proportion of migrants thus declined over the decades from a mere 0.36 per cent in 1941 -51 to 0.17 per cent in 1971 -81 (Table-5) due to absolute growth of resident population (denominator). As far as Nepali migration is concerned, no effect on fertility and mortality experiences as well as growth rate of population of the State was felt.

TABLE 5: ESTIMATES OF INTERCENSAL FRESH NEPALI (IN-) MIGRATION RATE : 1951-81

Year	Population (P)	Nepali migrants (M)	$M = \frac{M}{P}$	$r'$	R
1951	26,302,386	95,586	0.0036		
1961	34,926,279	109,190	0.0031	0.284	-0.0005
1971	44,312,011	100,365	0.0023	0.238	-0.0008
1981	54,581,000	93,519*	0.0017	0.208	-0.0006

\* Estimated on linear assumption.

The proportion of migrants to the total population at any time is the cumulative effect of past migration. When the proportions of migrants are known at successive censuses, their difference should indicate the fresh migration rate in the intercensal period. We formulate this as follows.

- Let  $P_1, P_2$  = population of the State at the first and second censuses respectively.  
 $M_1, M_2$  = number of migrants recorded in first and second censuses respectively.  
 $m_1, m_2$  = proportion of migrants to the resident population at the first and second censuses respectively.  
 $r$  = natural increase (exponential) of population.  
 $r' = r + R$ .  
 where  $R$  = fresh migration rate.

We have

$$e^r = \frac{P_2 - M_2}{P_1 - M_1} = \frac{P_2 \left(1 - \frac{M_2}{P_2}\right)}{P_1 \left(1 - \frac{M_1}{P_1}\right)} = \frac{P_2}{P_1} \cdot \frac{1 - m_2}{1 - m_1}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \therefore r &= \log_e \frac{P_2}{P_1} + \log_e \frac{1 - m_2}{1 - m_1} \\ &= r' + \log_e \frac{1 - m_2}{1 - m_1} \end{aligned}$$

$$\therefore r' - r = \log_e \frac{1 - m_1}{1 - m_2}$$

$$\text{this is, } R = \log_e \frac{1 - m_1}{1 - m_2}$$

It follows that as  $m_1$  and  $m_2$  approach each other from one census to another, the fresh migration rate ( $f$ ) tends to become smaller. As shown in Table 5, the fresh Nepali migration rates during 1951-81 are very small indeed. They are also negative.  $f$  does not indicate here excess out-migration, but implies lower fresh migration rate in the second census compared to the first. Unlike large migration streams from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) at a time, the migrants from Nepal appear to enter the State in small groups. This is evident from the small values of  $f$ , which varies from 0.05 per cent to 0.08 per cent during 1951-81. As  $R$  is very small,  $r$  and  $r'$  are nearly the same.

### *Return Migration*

In this section we try to estimate, at least approximately, the extent of Nepali return migration from West Bengal during 1971-81. Based on the 1971 census statistics on duration of residence, the cohort of migrants for 1962-71 was built up. The cohort size, as observed in 1971, would get depleted over the time period 1971-81 on account of deaths. But the death rates of these migrants are not firmly known. We have alternatively used the death rates of the general Nepali population residing in Nepal during the period under consideration. This is based on the assumption that the demographic behaviour of the Nepali migrants to West Bengal would be similar to that of their place of origin rather than that of the host population at least in the initial phases of their stay in the receiving State. Moreover, in their primary unsettled condition, these migrants would not possibly attain the low level of vital rates of the place of settlement. Whereas in 1976, the mid-year of the period 1971-81, West Bengal had a death rate of only a little over 12 per 1,000 population, Nepal had a level as high as 22. On the consideration that the reported mortality level in the decade had not changed much, and the year-to-year rate not available, we assumed a constant rate for the period. The procedure for estimating deaths to migrants over the decade 1971-81 may be stated as follows.

Let  $A$  be the size of the cohort (1962-71) of Nepali immigrants in 1971. The constant death rate is  $d$ . We have

$$M - D_1 = D_1$$

Where  $D_1$  is the number of deaths in the first year and

$$M - D_1 = S_1,$$

the number of survivors among the immigrants at the end of first year. In the beginning of the second year we start with  $S_1$  number of immigrants, who are subjected to death rate,  $d$ . Thus

$S_1 \times d = D_2$  Where  $D_2$  is the number of deaths in the second year and

$$S_1 - D_2 = S_2,$$

the number of immigrants surviving at the end of second year. Proceeding similarly, we obtain in general

$$S_{i-1} - D_i = S_i$$

Further, if  $D$  denotes total deaths that occurred over the decade among immigrants, then

$D = M - S_i$  In other words, the expected reduced size of the cohort of 1962-71 immigrants would be

$$S_i = M - D$$

in 1981. This estimate is compared with the actually observed size in 1981 as derived from the duration of residence group 10-19 years. The excess of  $S_i$  over the latter figure approximately gives the extent of Nepali return migration from 1962-71 cohort. This is shown in Table 6. Whereas about 16 per cent of the male immigrants returned either to Nepal or to places other than West Bengal, only a little over 5 per cent of the female immigrants did so over the period. It is possible that the greater number of females than males settles here through inter-community marriage.

TABLE 6: APPROXIMATE ESTIMATES OF NEPALI RETURN MIGRANTS FROM WEST BENGAL IN 1981 FROM AMONGST THE 1962-71 COHORT OF IMMIGRANTS

1.	Size of 1962-71 cohort in 1971 <sup>1</sup>	22255	14770	37025
2.	Assumed crude death rate in 1976 of Nepali migrants per 1000 population <sup>2</sup>	21.5	22.8	22.2
3.	Estimating number of deaths among the 1962-71 cohort during 1971-81 <sup>3</sup>	4344	3039	7383
4.	Expected size of 1962-71 cohort in 1981 <sup>4</sup>	17911	11731	29642
5.	Observed size (adjusted) of 1962-71 cohort in 1981 <sup>5</sup>	14384	10934	25318
6.	Estimated return migrants during 1971-81 from 1962-71 cohort <sup>6</sup>	3527	797	4324

<sup>1</sup> Obtained from the 1971 census table on migration by duration of residence.

<sup>2</sup> Obtained from the ESCAP (UN), 1980. Population of Nepal, Country Monograph, Series No. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Derived as per the procedure described in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Obtained by subtracting the estimated number of deaths (item 3) from the cohort as observed in 1971 (item 1).

<sup>5</sup> The observed number of migrants in 1981 census appears to be grossly under-enumerated. On linear assumption, we had adjusted the 1981 figures upwardly.

<sup>6</sup> Derived from the difference of sizes of the cohort as indirectly estimated (item 4) and as observed (with adjustment) in 1981 (item 5).

The procedure described allows year-to-year estimation of deaths among the survivors of the 1962-71 cohort of immigrants. Since it does not take into account the yearly return migration, the estimates of deaths might have been over-estimated, and those of the return

migrants under-estimated. Moreover, the applicability and the assumption of constancy (over the decade) of mortality level of the general population residing in Nepal in 1976 for the Nepali immigrants to West Bengal could not be verified. The estimates, so derived, should therefore be interpreted with caution.

### General Discussion

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the history of movement of Nepalese to West Bengal, in general, and to Darjeeling, in particular. The other districts of the state, where large concentration of Nepalese occurred, have been Jalpaiguri, Calcutta and 24 Parganas. It is not, however, a part of our objective either to study mobility behaviour of Nepalese or to attempt historical reconstruction, but to establish a baseline from which incisive future research might proceed. Given the limitation of census data on which we depended solely, any changes in the nature of movement over long period of time could not be examined. Tracing a migrant's life course could have linked important events of birth, education, marriage, and work to moves made between various places at different times.

Unlike the great influx of people from Bangladesh, the Nepali migration to West Bengal has never assumed a status of a large scale exodus at any point of time in the past. The fullfledged migration of Nepalese is believed to have been initiated with the recruitment of Gorkha from a particular region of Nepal into British Army. Moreover, the construction of Darjeeling Himalayan Railways in the seventies of the last century worked as pull factor for Nepali migration to West Bengal. Nevertheless, the actual number who initially migrated is not precisely known. Migration data on this count even for 1981 (not to speak of 1991 Census) are not yet fully available, but based on limited census information, one may estimate that probably a net life time migrants of 93519 settled in West Bengal in 1981.

In a process as complex and dynamic as migration, single factor explanations for reasons that interplay the movement may be simplistic distortions of reality. However, there is no denying of the existence of push-pull factors. The Nepalese were relatively immobile at least in the earlier centuries, but the resource scarce country pushed them to a destination with more employment and income producing opportunities. The interplay of social and economic factors might have caused considerable mobility; but the selectivity of migration distorts the demographic structure and connotes a number of social and economic implications. Even though a cohort analysis was not possible, the crude census data indicated a heavier migration among the young and among the males than among segments of the population.

Going by the census information, there seem to be a slight reversal of the trends of population flow in the recent decades. About 16 per cent of male immigrants are estimated to have returned either to Nepal or to places other than West Bengal; on the other hand, only a little over 5 per cent females did so during the period 1971 -81. Interestingly, there has been a sex differential of settlement patterns. Compared to men, Nepali women showed more rural bias and settled through inter-community marriages. Indeed, estimates of fresh migration rate during 1951-81 are very very small. An analysis of statistics on duration of residence in the host country reveals that the recent cohorts of Nepali immigrants show more affinity to return

to their homeland or to other destinations than the older cohorts. There could be host of reasons for this, but the declining job market, particularly in the primary sector of rural areas and tertiary and secondary sectors of urban areas in which the Nepalese were used to be absorbed to a great extent, the cost-price squeeze and other unfavourable conditions resulted in the changes of direction of flow of recent migrants.

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