

MIGRATION AS NON TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREAT: A CASE STUDY OF SIKKIM

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ABSTRACT: Migration is a simple word with relatively extensive meaning. Migration is a process which had started since time immemorial and will continue till lives exist in this world. Migrations possess very real dilemmas for the regions, countries and states. Sikkim, a tiny Himalayan state in the north eastern region of India, is a place where no record of any violence has been recorded as such till date. But the indigenous people of Sikkim are likely to find some kind of human security threat in near future if not now. Sikkimese of/in Sikkim is recognized by the Sikkim Subject Certificate/Certificate of Identification given by the King of Sikkim then in 1961, provided with special privileges by the Government of India when became a part. Today, the SSC/COI holder is being outnumbered by the migrants from other parts of the country, while leaving the Sikkimese, minority in their own land.

KEY WORDS: Development, Demand, Identity, Influx, Local, Migration, Migrants, Threat

INTRODUCTION

The concept of security traditionally, has been interpreted as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy. In this process, the legitimate concerns of common people and their quest for individual security in their daily lives-protection from the threat of diseases, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental degradation were not given due consideration. In the post-Cold War period it is increasingly becoming clear that many conflicts and their causes are within nations rather than between nations. For most people, a sense of insecurity come not so much from the traditional security concerns such as military aggression of another nation,

but from the concerns about their survival, self-preservation and well being. The Human Security concept evolved at a time of great international shifts, the disintegration of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War, but it gave way to the recognition of new threats and conflicts. The origins of the idea of “human security” can be related (if not traced back) to the growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing notion of development and security in the 1960s–1980s (Acharya, 2011). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its Human Development Report of 1994 first articulated this dimension of non-traditional security, which has come to be known as Human Security. The term ‘Human Security’ has been used in many different contexts to justify certain course of action. Human Security is a condition or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people’s right, their safety or even their lives. It is an alternative way of seeing the world, taking people as its point of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or governments. There are many factors that led to Human security threat. The 1994 UN Human Development Report identified drug trafficking, migration, terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) as major threats to human security. While talking about such threats ‘Migration’ is now considered one of the new security threats and Myron Weiner has treated population flows as an independent rather than dependent variables in his security analysis (Datta, 2004). Migration generally refers to the movement of people from one place of the world to another for the purpose of taking permanent or semi-permanent residence. Migration is the fact that has been going on since time immemorial, but in today’s world it tends to become a major problem in the way of development. Migrants have increasingly become a feature of the global economy as

globalization has opened up opportunities for an unprecedented movement of people, ideas and investments (Fink, 2007). The influx of the migrants and consequent undermining of the economic interest of the native population gradually change the demographic composition of the host region, eventually leading to political tensions. This kind of tensions manifest in different forms ranging from political agitations, violent struggle, militant activities and insurgencies. Insurgencies of various types have cited unchecked migration as the prime reason for their struggle against the established order.

SIKKIM AND THE HUMAN SECURITY THREAT

In case of Sikkim, it is a tiny hilly northeastern state of India with only 7,096 sq. kms of area. It is the 22nd state of India which came into existence with effect from 26th April, 1975. Sikkim was an independent state ruled by the Namgyal monarchy. But even though it was an independent state, before Sikkim became a unit of India in 1975, it was an Indian Protectorate. Under the Indo-Sikkim treaty of 1950, India had exclusive control over Sikkim's defence, external affairs, and communications. The internal running of the country was left to the people themselves (Kazi, 2009). In 1975, a referendum was held which brought about an end to the absolute monarchy and the state ushered in a democratic government within the constitution of India.

First authentic information regarding Sikkim's population composition is available in the census of 1891, which explains that the total population was 30,458 of which 5,762 were Lepchas, 4,894 Bhutias, 3,356 Limbus and 15,458 Nepalis. The Lepchas are believed to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim. Today indigenous people of Sikkim consist of the Lepcha, Bhutia (People who migrated from Kham province of Tibet), and Nepali (People who migrated from Nepal). But it is believed that Limbus who essentially are part of a Nepali community have inhabited west Sikkim since the time immemorial. The Limbus inhabited the western part of Sikkim which was contiguous to an ancient Limbu Kingdom, Limbuan, in East Nepal (Subba, 1988).

The Sikkimese identity came into existence particularly after the *Durbar*¹ recognized the earlier settlers as legal settlers who had been given the status of subjects of Sikkim which referred to as "Sikkimese" by Sikkim Subject Regulations, 1961. The Sikkim Ruling *Durbar* maintained a register of all such legal settlers who were recognized as Sikkim subjects. When Sikkim became the 22nd state of India, the Indian Constitution was extended to Sikkim and the Sikkim Citizenship Order 1975 was issued by the Indian Government. According to this order, every person who immediately before the 26th day of April, 1975 was a Sikkim subject under the Sikkim Subject Regulations, 1961 shall be deemed to have become a citizen of India on that day. Sikkim has been given a special status along with special provisions i.e Article 371-F.

There were numerous clashes in between the three groups in the past. But in spite of bit confusion and clashes in the past, they (Bhutia, Lepcha, Nepalis) together became the indigenous people of this part of India. Whatever may be the reasons for the growth and development of these three ethnic groups in Sikkim, the most important fact is that these three communities have lived together for a long time and have many things to share in common.

But when the British connection with Sikkim began in the early 19th century, it was during this time that some people from the places like Bengal, Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan, UP and other places of India, who are generally referred to as 'plainsmen' began to migrate to Sikkim. They were essentially traders participating in the then famous trans-himalayan trade (Sarma, 1994).

The plainsmen are usually called '*Madishey*'² by the local people. The word *Madishey* has been derived from the word '*Madesh*'. The word '*Madesh*' in Sikkim's local Nepali language means plains. Thus '*Madishey*' literally mean people who are originally from the plains. These people mainly consist of people who have migrated to Sikkim from the states of Bengal, Bihar, UP, Rajasthan etc. These people migrated to Sikkim as traders, teachers, office clerks, businessman, skilled labourers etc. But even if the person is a Bhutia, Lepcha or

¹During the regime of *Chogyal or the King*

²*Madishey* is a local term used by the Sikkimese people to refer to plainsmen.

Nepali from the plains he/she is not considered/called as *Madishey*. So, *Madishey* is a typical term used by the Local people for mainland Indians.

Amongst all the madisheys, the Marwaris came initially for the wool business in the Indo-Tibetan trade. There were a few from Bengal serving as tutors to the royal family members. The trade and business was dominated by the Biharis and Marwaris. Bhutias used to be the only trading community before Marwaris came in Sikkim, but after those migrated people started migrating and engaging in trade activities, it had affected the Bhutia traders of Sikkim at that time. Plainsmen came almost together with the British basically for trade purpose. The Marwaris were mainly cloth merchants though earlier they were actively engaged in trade across border and Cardamom business. The Bengalis, who began coming here with the British administrators, remained as clerks, officers, administrators and teachers (Subba, 1988). Along with that educated unemployed began to enter into Sikkim and get the job within a week or a month. After the merger of Sikkim with India highly educated and professionally trained people started to enter into the state and started occupying some of the key positions in service sectors.

The Marwaris in particular have exploited the ignorant and illiterate people by resorting to various clandestine methods. Since there were groups of such Marwaris in every town or township in Sikkim from the very beginning of the 19th century, it is quite likely that the local people were subjected to the exploitative prowess of the seasoned traders from the plains of India. The plains traders, particularly the Marwaris, were holding advantageous position vis-à-vis the local people throughout the state. It was always the local people who were at the receiving end, not the other way around (Sarma, 1994).

In today's scenario of the state, the number of outsiders in the state has increased enormously along with the plainsmen. By term "Outsider" in the context of Sikkim we mean those people living/working in Sikkim without the possession of "Sikkim Subject Certificate/Certificate of Identification". Today we can see a wide range impact on the indigenous people of Sikkim due to migration of the outsider. The trade and business in Sikkim is almost completely dominated by them. The local people are lacking behind. If we look into the past in terms of

business as a means of livelihood, Bhutias were the most affected, but now the same can be said about the other Sikkimese ethnic groups like Lepchas and Nepalis. If we look at today's business scenario in Sikkim it is completely dominated by the migrated businessmen from the plains. Not only that, but if we look at other private sectors, more number of outsiders are involved and have been working efficiently as compared to the local people.

So, it has now become important to explore the primary reason behind the backwardness of the indigenous people of Sikkim as compared to the migrated people, especially in the field of business. Along with that it has turned out to be essential to analyze the probability of conflict that may occur in the future. Considering the likelihood of changes in the rights and privileges which is being enjoyed by the Sikkimese ethnic group so far, it has become imperative to consider the potential conflict between the indigenous people and the migrated population. Even though the Sikkimese people are not completely vocal about the ever increasing domination of the migrated business community in Sikkim, but we can foresee the rising tension among the ethnic groups and the migrated workers or the so called old settlers. There is always a hidden tensions or weirdness in relationship between the Sikkimese ethnic group and migrated people, to take an example the state have recently witnessed a kind of discontent in Sikkimese people ruptured because of the writ petition filed for Income Tax exemption by the Association of Old Settlers of Sikkim. Thus, the petition has led to the debate between insider and outsider. It is possible that it could lead to more radical turn in future. This type of debatable issues may give way to the rise in conflict between the two groups in some other matters as well. We can see and feel that outsiders are outnumbering the Sikkimese people which may lead to various problems. As local indigenous population is being outnumbered by the migrated ones we are bound to consider this fact seriously as these issues have already been faced by some other states of the country which in turn has resulted into several unprecedented conflicts.

In the present scenario Sikkim has emerged as one of the best place to visit in the world with organizations like Lonely Planet declaring Sikkim as the best place to visit in 2014. Sikkim

has been able to get to this level owing to its reputation of cleanliness, scenic as well as natural beauty and political stability. The state of Sikkim is not only a paradise for the tourists but it has also served as a destination where people have come and made a good living. Sikkim has been a peaceful state until now and the Sikkimese people peace loving who welcomed each and everyone with an open heart but now it is being felt that the outsiders have started dominating the indigenous Sikkimese.

THE MYTH AND THE REALITY

Analyzing Sikkim, being a small state lying in one corner of the country, it has no doubt developed a lot. It has been one of the most visited states of India. Owing to its natural beauty, peace and cleanliness, people love to visit Sikkim time and again. But at the same time people from other states of India finds the place apt for business. The outsiders in this sense eventually start dominating the private sectors in Sikkim. Gangtok, being the capital of the state, a huge number of business communities from outside are settled here. The findings show that both insider and outsider have their own respective perceptions. The local people feel that they are being deprived of economic opportunities and the importance of Sikkim Subject Certificate/COI is decreasing day by day while the outsiders are of the view that the local people lack the potential to grasp the lying opportunities. The outsiders do not find any kind of threat to the local from outsiders. While the indigenous people of Sikkim express that the actual Sikkimese are those who possess the Sikkim Subject Certificate/COI while particularly the Old Settlers of Sikkim deny it. They are of the view that even though they do not possess the COI but they are living here since last 100 years and have contributed a lot in the development of the state. So, the Old Settlers particularly feel that they should also get equal rights and privileges as do the other Sikkimese ethnic group. Despite the fact that they have contradicting views, there have been no severe incidents as such but whenever these incidents thus take place in the state, it would be a great disaster for the peaceful state of Sikkim. Among the insider and outsider there is no unanimity as who should be considered as the authentic Sikkimese in today's context. Although there are several historical evidence and documentation to confirm oneself

as the citizen of the state but all these might not hold much value if the central government decides to make some changes in the near future. As Sikkim is in the phase of transformation, the indigenous communities remain ever more confused and apprehensive about this gradual change, the change, which is unavoidable. As a part of my research it was found out that the local Sikkimese people consider mainly the Old Settlers and the Plainsmen/Madisheys as threat more than other Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas from neighboring Darjeeling and Kalimpong. It may also be due to the fact that historically Darjeeling district was a part of Sikkim and also due to the fact that many Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas of Sikkim have blood relatives in these regions. There are people from Darjeeling and Kalimpong in Sikkim who have been living here and doing their respective jobs, but they never fail to mention that they belong to their respective places and have not interest to be called as Sikkimese. But on the other hand while conducting surveys it was observed that Old Settlers prefer to call themselves as Sikkimese. Though it has been also found out that the Old Settlers denied to accept the Sikkim Subject Certificate/COI when Chogyal offered it because they said that they have their own 'Desh'/country and they do not want to be subjects of Sikkim. When Sikkim became a part of India, Sikkim was given a status of Special Category State and was given many concessions. Likewise, various benefits were extended to Sikkim as per Article 371-F which guaranteed special rights and privileges to the subjects of Sikkim. These privileges are being enjoyed by the local people so far but with the recent demand of Old Settlers about the IT exemption and calling Nepalis as foreigners, it seemed the local people have started feeling insecure. The concern for non-traditional security threat has increased somehow in the mind of the people. The local people think that the outsiders are grasping every little opportunity that has to be theirs. The Government is also helpless as per the locals, because the outsiders are playing a greater role in forming the Government, thus Government is compelled to work for their benefit too and give less preference to locals. The locals think the Sikkimese citizenship is for the Sikkimese people and should not be abolished as it is the only hope which is giving some opportunities to local at least in the Government sector. It has been found out that the Old Settlers and other outsiders do

not think that they are threat to the local as such. They have a notion that the local people themselves are incompetent and lazy. In their opinion the locals need to be more skilled and try to grasp the readily available opportunity and stop running after the Government jobs. As per the outsiders the local people should instead take migration of outsiders positively and are suggestive that it is due them only the people of Sikkim are getting opportunities outside. They prefer to call themselves Sikkimese and everyone who have been staying here since many years should be called Sikkimese or should be regarded as a local. They are against the Sikkimese citizenship because they think it is bringing discrimination amongst people.

While conducting surveys it has been found that the main problem with the local indigenous people is their impracticability. The local people think that the opportunities that are supposed to acquire by the locals but at the same time they find themselves incompetent in front of the outsiders. They think that the outsiders are skilled but they do not seem to work on making themselves the same. It is also true that while the ancestors of outsiders/madisheys were into the same profession on the other the ancestors of local Sikkimese people were agriculturists. Thus, it made them difficult to be sure about that profession. It has also been felt that the local Sikkimese people tend to prefer Government jobs as it is more secure compared to unparallel waters of commercial or business activities . Local people are unconfident and unsure about themselves. Even though the Sikkimese people are educated but they lack practical knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Migration is a simple word with relatively extensive meaning. It is something which has always been in this world since the creation of humankind. Migration may not be regarded as threat as long as it is not hampering the sentiments of the locals. Migration is a necessity as local people themselves are unable to fulfill the demands which are highly necessary for the development of the state. It is acceptable to some extent to give more preference to the local people in the opportunities available but it cannot be done at the cost of quality work required. This is one of the reasons why many of the government as well as private sectors in Sikkim are compelled to hire outsiders to

remain competitive. The outsiders could be regarded as a threat, if their demands similar to IT exemptions increase. If similar demands are claimed by the new as well as old outsiders of Sikkim there is a high possibility of conflict in Sikkim. With time the outsiders may even demand special rights and privileges similar to the ones enjoyed by the SSC/COI holders. In such a situation the center government may extend the provisions to the outsiders as well or may completely abolish these provisions. The conflict scenario till now is hidden in the state but if the system continues to remain the same then the problem will erupt in future. As research have found out that there are many weaknesses of Sikkimese people which gave way to the migration into the state, thus it should be taken as a matter of concern. The Sikkimese people are still backward and unskilled as compared to the outsiders. The people should develop a positive attitude on migration and thus should work on making themselves more skilled, competitive and capable of replacing the outsiders. The Government should also provide schemes and professional training to make local people self reliable and competitive. The people should also try to recognize their talents and work on to it. If the local people become skilled and competitive then they will be in a position to replace the outsiders, the migration rate will automatically decrease. Number of migrants increases where there are more opportunities available. If Sikkimese are able to see or rather foresee such opportunities they can make good progress in tackling the unemployment issues in the state. This will also result in higher level of competition; ultimately decreasing the dependency on the outsiders. The subjects of Sikkim may not forever get the special provisions such as the 371F or 26AAA. The Sikkimese have to accept that these provisions are here temporarily. These special privileges extended to Sikkim will one day come to an end. Hence, the Sikkimese subject should always be prepared to compete at any level. The Sikkimese subjects also have to accept the fact that Sikkim is no longer a separate kingdom. It is now a part of a democratic Indian union. This means that an Indian citizen from any part of the country is in equal terms with the citizen of Sikkim as both are part of the same constitution. These facts support the thought that one day Sikkim will be treated as any other state in the country. The

Sikkimese society should understand that it's a globalized world where people are moving across countries and continents. It can be said that the outsiders have also contributed a lot in the development of the state. There is no doubt about it. Though the locals may find the outsiders as threat for them but it should also be taken into account that internal migrants contribute cheap labour for manufacturing and services and in doing so contribute to national GDP. Thus, it would be wrong to say that migration is always a threat to Sikkimese people. The outsiders too should always respect the local people, their unique culture, tradition and religious values. Irrespective of how long the outsiders have been into the state and for whatever purpose, their success would not have been possible without the ever hospitable attitude of the Sikkimese people. Outsiders in Sikkim may argue that Sikkim is a part of India and outsiders being an Indian citizen should get the same rights in Sikkim as they get in rest of India. But outsiders in Sikkim should also consider that the merger of Sikkim, an independent Kingdom into Indian Union was accepted with pain by the Sikkimese Subjects as they lost their identity as subjects of an independent kingdom nonetheless they accepted it amicably. Sikkimese people co-operated with the Indian Union and have accepted themselves as Indians first and Sikkimese later. Thus in order to provide due respect to the sacrifice of their Independent Country and merger with India, Article 371F of the Indian constitution was inserted preserving the OLD LAWS (*Sikkim Income Tax Manual 1948, Sikkim Companies Registration Act 1961 etc*) and Sikkim Subjects were promised their identity. Sikkimese society is very small as compared to many other states of India. The population of Sikkim is not even equivalent to populations of small districts in West Bengal, UP, Bihar etc. As per the 2011 census the total population of Sikkim was mere 6,07,688 and when we talk about the Sikkim Subject or COI holders in Sikkim the numbers become even less. This population can easily be outnumbered by the migrants from other states of India where the population count is in crores or billions. This makes Sikkimese people even more important as they are in minority in India. There is always a threat that the entire Sikkimese can be dominated by the outsiders if no proper measures are taken. For the outsiders they may play a greater role in the development of the state of Sikkim

but this cannot at a cost of hurting sentiments of the Sikkimese people. Overall Sikkimese society have accepted outsiders whether newly settled or old settlers as their prized guests but at no point in time Sikkimese society would want to give the keys of Sikkim to the outsiders, at no point in time they would want the guests to become the owners of their home.

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