

Remittance from Gurkha's as a Source of Foreign Currencies and Contribution to Livelihood Practices of Left Behind.

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Abstract

Study shows that remittances from the Gurkha's are an important source of foreign currency for Nepal which has also been contributing as a reliable source of income for the family and relatives left behind. The article depicts the statistical data of Gurkhas who have been in service and retired, in the Indian army and the British army. For the study here, I have deployed the observation and purposive sampling method followed by semi-structured interview techniques to collect the required data. My respondents are the household heads of employees and office personnel of Indian and British pension camp for primary data, and records from respective camp for secondary data. The finding shows a huge amount of Indian rupees and British pound as a foreign currency remitted by Gurkhas. The data shows that there are NPR.1,28,52 crores inward remittance come to Nepal annually from Gurkhas. On top of that, the remittances are playing a vital role to uplift the economic condition of left behind. However, the absence of energetic migrants has changed the traditional socio-cultural construction of the community, the role of women in the household chore, and demographic composition. Positively, women are empowered and economically they get a reliable source of income throughout their life. While single parenting, the loneliness of old parents, and sacrifice for social relations seem very challenging to manage them as a social being. Findings also show that there is a tangible gap between the pace of global economic advancement and local economic advancement, which has encouraged youths to join the army.

Keywords: army, remittances, foreign currency, pensions, resources, employment opportunity, survival.

Introduction

Mobility of human beings for their better survival is not a new social phenomenon; rather it is a historic and ever-going process. The reason for mobility is always contextual such as poor geography, socio-economic condition, and political chaos, etc., whichever the stronger push factors, people move towards the destination for a better life. The economic benefit when they earn and send to their family and relatives in the origin, it is said to be remittances. Julia and Chris (2019) define it as 'a remittance is funds that are sent or transferred to another party usually abroad'. Currently, Nepal is in the third position with a per capita income of 1090 \$, amongst the countries which receive the highest proportion of remittances in terms of GDP (World Bank, 2020).

In relative terms, the top 5 countries receiving remittance are Kyrgyz Republic (35%), Tonga (33%), Tajikistan (31%), Haiti (29%), Nepal (29%), and Liberia (27%) *ibid*. In an earlier period, it is said that remittances had represented more than 10 percent of GDP in Nepal in the late 1990s. (Gaudel, 2006). For low-income countries where their economy is struggling to develop, remittances play a significant role as a lifeline. Moreover, it is an important source of foreign currency for the receiving country. In the year 2000/01, the contribution of

remittance to Nepal's foreign currency earning was approximately 30 % which increased to 50.8 % in 2007/08 and the share of remittance in Nepal's total foreign currency earnings rose to 54.8 % in the first six months of 2008/09. This growth rate of remittance sheds light on its importance for an import-based economy like Nepal. Ojha.

For such a huge amount of in remittances, Nepal has swapped over with a lot of energetic youths, among them Gurkhas are historic. Originally the name Gurkhas was the army raised by King Prithivi Narayan Shah for the Gorkha kingdom. Later on the derivative "Gurkha" became the common name for all warriors serving in the Nepalese, British and Indian army. The article here attempts to describe the contributions of Gurkha's remittances to the Nepalese economy as a source of foreign currency and contributions to the livelihood of their family and relatives. However, the socio-cultural changes, the sacrifice of the social bonding with their family, and children by Gurkhas all are important which has not sermon here.

The Gurkhas

Gurkhas are known as Lahure in Nepal. *Lahure* means "person of Lahore". "The term most commonly used for a soldier who serves or has served in foreign armies is *Lahure*, a corruption of Lahore, the city in Punjab where, even before they took service with the British, many Nepalese were enlisted into the Sikh army of Ranjit Singh" (Singh, 1962:119; cited in Caplan, 2003:15). Later on, all the employees as an army whichever the country they belong are known as Lahure like, Nepalko Lahure, Indiako Lahure, or Britishko Lahure. According to Banskota (1994:221), "about 55,000 recruits were supplied to British in First World War and about 1, 10,000 recruits in the Second World War and they fought on the behave of British colonial government.

Later on, with the independence of India in 1947, it was decided that the Gurkha regiments would be divided between the British and new Indian armies, as in the Anglo-Nepalese war (1814-16) the native soldiers from Nepal had made an impression of bravery, sincerity, and honesty on the British colonial government. Thus after experiencing Gurkhas as first-hand in the Anglo Nepal war, the British and then later independent India formally recruited Nepalese youth as a regular army. However, the door for formal induction of Gurkhas had opened after the treaty between Amar Sing Thapa and Devid Octorlony, the two representatives of the East India Company and Nepal government in 1815 AD. Later on, the tri-party agreement of 1947 allowed both Britain and India to continue to recruit Gurkhas".

The original group of soldiers came, with others, was called Nusseree Battalion, later it was known as the first King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles. (Gurkha Welfare Trust, 17 Sep 2018). Since then it is continuing to till date and now almost 36 thousand Gurkha youths are working as an employee in the Indian army and about 3 thousand youth in the British army.

Objectives of the study

- ❖ To examine Gurkha's contributions to earn foreign currency.
- ❖ To study the significant role of remittances for livelihood practices of left behind.

Study Location

The study area is Syangja district, Biruwa Rural Municipality Ward No. three (3) Rang Bhang and Khang Rang Gautole and, two Gautole of Putlibazzar Municipality Ward 2. This area is a prominent locality of Gurkhas, from where two people had participated and lost their lives in World War II, and four soldiers were imprisoned in Malaysia by Japan during World War II. The total households are 335 with 1,541 populations. The majority of young men in this area are employed in the United Kingdom and India as Gurkhas.

Methodology

The research method used here is quantitative as well as qualitative. The nature of research is descriptive and accordingly, the research design has been deployed. The required data were collected through observation and survey questionnaire followed by semi-structured interview techniques. The sample size for the collection of data has been determined based on the purposive sampling method. Out of three major pension camp located in Pokhara, Dharan, and Kathmandu, Kathmandu pension camp are selected purposively as it is the Centre of all camps. To study the livelihood practice of leaving behind the household survey (HHS) was made before sampling.

There were 335 households; among them, 180 households belong to the Lahure family, listed as a universe for sampling. Ten from each Gauntole that is 40 HHs was selected as a sample household. The total population of the sample household is 185. Among them 70 male and 115 were female. Regarding the caste composition of the study area, the entire four Gauntole are ethnically dominated and the occupational group is in minority.

Theoretical perspective

Employment in a foreign country is a complex phenomenon by nature as purposes, causes and determinants to migrate differ from one individual to another. However, the induction of Gurkhas as an arm-force in the East India Company Government and subsequently in the Indian Army is due to their bravery, courage, and honesty as shown in the Anglo-Nepal war. "These first Gurkhas were acquired in one of the two ways: they were either taken prisoners or subsequently offered employment or they deserted and came into the British camps seeking to take service with their erstwhile enemies" (Des Chene, 1991: 49). Later on, it has become like an occupation to earn a livelihood for Nepali youth. Thus the Gurkha soldiers not only had earned fame for their honesty and bravery but also they got better economic benefit than their homeland. Moreover, their earnings are contributing to the state as an important source of foreign currency.

So, to analyze their financial contribution to the left behind and to the state as a source of foreign currency, I have conferred two levels of theoretical base neoclassical economic theory at the macro level and micro level. The macro-level theory describes foreign employment as the Gurkhas, which is a social phenomenon caused by wage differences between two different countries that is origin and destination. This concept will help to understand the economic benefits as a fundamental of employment for Gurkhas which is still lucrative as the majority of the employment opportunity in the study area is seasonal and less productive,

unlike the induction in the army. For example, farming is a seasonal occupation and they also lack the skilled manpower and technology for off-season production and commercialized farming. So, they can only engage for nine months in agricultural production, and the rest of the time they lack NPR.1,28,52 crores reliable jobs to earn their livelihood. This situation pushes them to join the army or to move as labor in a foreign country.

Secondly, the micro-level economic theory which not only talks about wage difference rather it also emphasis on a collective decision of the family to maximize income and to manage survival risks. In the study area, when young males reach the age of 17 they start to seek employment opportunities and they have to confirm either to join in the army, or continue their education or to go abroad for employment. Higher education, it is affordable only for those youths whose family has a stable regular income to send their children in the urban area to join colleges and universities. So comprehending the existing reality of the family, the young men along with the guardians and relatives they made the final decision. However, the standard economic theory posits that earnings differential between home and potential destination influences the migration decision.

Review of Literature

Throughout the world, a poor condition in infrastructure development has created lots of issues like unemployment, poverty, nepotism, corruptions, and ultimately poor status of the country in the Human development index. These conditions impact the young and energetic people who have run out of options for job opportunities and are forced to leave their origin for earning their livelihood. However, the prospect of foreign employment becomes an attractive source of income for the relatives and children who are left behind at the origin. These remittances also have great importance to the state in maintaining a stable foreign exchange rate with Nepalese rupees and economic stability. Ojha. The literature on employment in a foreign country shows lots of causal factors in origin. For example, research in India conducted by Duby (2015) on causes of migration reveals, huge population, rigid educational system, and lack of good job opportunities were the cause factors for labor migration.

In the context of Nepal, Shrestha (1017) using 2010-11 NLSS data found that the village outmigration rate had a positive effect on girls' school enrollment nevertheless his study does not specify Gurkhas. Moreover, using survey data from a rural agricultural setting Bhandari (2004) from Chitwan Valley, finds that households with less access to cultivated land are more likely to migrate. Based on qualitative research in a village of Kathmandu District, Gaurab (2014) suggests that earnings differentials between home and destination influence the decision to migrate. Likewise, Gautam, (2005) studies on, causes and impacts of migration at Kandebash Baglung illustrate the causes of migration were unemployment, food deficiency, and increased expenditure. For the fulfillment of their needs, most male people were migrated to India for earning. As an impact of migration, he concluded that there was a change in sex ratio and a lack of male workers to participate in development work.

Thus, kinds of literature on employment in the foreign country argue that migrant workers mostly migrate from their origin for economic prosperity and to reduce financial risk through

remittances. This social phenomenon in Nepal is in increasing trend since Nepal is not able to utilize its available resources properly like hydropower, medical herbs, fertile land, and panoramic Mountain View for a prosperous tourism industry which has a lot potential to create employment opportunity. Hence, the dearth of employment opportunities has pushed them to leave origin for foreign employment. Although, there are significant repercussions in the social aspect caused due to foreign employment which is overlooked. Besides, the social cost borne by, their family, relatives, society, and the country itself is not an issue to turn a blind eye on. The major argument of this article is that the economic benefit from Gurkhas is vital for both their left behind and the state though they must think about the long-term localized and sustainable economy for the forthcoming generation family.

Existing Status of Gurkhas

There are altogether eleven Gurkha regiment working in the British and Indian army where seven regiments (one, three, four, five, eight, nine, and eleven) are in the Indian army and four regiments (two, six, seven and ten) are in the British army. According to attaché JC Upadhaya (26 March 2019), from Indian Pension Camp, almost 36 thousand soldiers are serving in the Indian army.

Similarly, about 1 lakh 27 thousand pensioners (90,000 of Indian army and 37,000 of central and State Governments including Para-military) draw pensions from different pension offices located in the different cities of Nepal. About 30 thousand of these pensioners are paid directly in their respective bank account and for the remaining pensioners who are residing in the remote areas; the Indian government has been carrying out 36 pension distribution camps every year in various remote locations. (Desh Pandey, 2017a).

Likewise, about 3 thousand soldiers are working as arm forces in the United Kingdom (UK). This year (2019), 120 soldiers from the British army and 120 soldiers for Singapore police were recruited. In the case of British Pensioner, there are more than 21 thousand retired soldiers receiving pensions from the British government. However, the retired soldiers after 2006 are not included because they are residing in England. Besides, about 300 Nepali people are working as employees in a different branch of the British Pension camp (March 27, 2019, Pension officer British camp).

Foreign currencies as Remittances from Gurkhas

The total annual amount of Pension drawn by Indian pensioners is INR. 2,500 Crore, equivalent Nepalese Rupees NPR. 4,000 Crore and after considering the annual increment this amount is likely to reach INR.3,000 Crore or NPR 4,800 Crore per annum by 2018/19, (Deshpande, 17 February, 2017b). Regarding the salary of newly recruited soldiers, they draw about INR.30 thousand as a starting salary, and currently, they are about 36 thousand in numbers serving in the Indian army. They draw about INR. 4,060 crores or NPR.6,500 crores annum as a salary on regular basis. Moreover, the Nepali employees in the Pension camp as a civil servant also draw Indian currency.

With the British army about GBP 8 crores per annum is drawn as a pension. On top of that, there is the amount of regular salary received by current soldiers who are in service is GBP. 7.68 crores or NPR. 11,52 crores equivalent Nepalese rupees.

Table 1

Amount of pension and salary drew by the Indian army and the British army

S.N.	Particular	Amount in crores	Amount in crores (NPR)
1	Annual Pension amount of Indian army	INR 2,500	4,000
2	Annual Salary amount of Indian army	INR 4,060	6,500
3	Annual Pension amount of British army	GBP 8	1,200
4	Annual Salary amount of British army	GBP 7.68	1,152
	Total Remittances		12,852

Source: Field Visit, 2019

The above table of total remittances excludes the regular annual salary drawn by approximately 300 civil servants working in different British pension camps and welfare offices in Nepal. Likewise, it also excludes the regular salary of civil servants who are working in Indian pension camps located in different parts of Nepal.

Livelihood practices of family and relatives left behind

The families of Gurkha's are generally involved in all kinds of socio-economic activities similar to other neighbors. However, they appear to be more comfortable and give less priority to the traditional occupation as they become economically more secure as compared to the other people who are bound to continue the traditional production system or choose foreign employees as migrant labor. The grandmothers of Gurkha soldier who have recently joined in the British army, said, "*Yusko pani aba dekhi dukha ka din sakiye*" means his misery is gone from today. Because a newly recruited soldier in the British army gets almost GBP.2,000 as monthly salary which is much higher than the average earnings of Nepalese people. The following data shows the existing number of pensioners and in-service people in the study area.

Table 2

Number of people pensioners

S. N.	Particular	HHs of respondents	Percentage
1	In-service in the British army	5	12.5%
2	British Pensioner	7	17.5%
3	In-service- in Indian army	13	32.5%
4	Pensioner from India	14	35.0%
5	An employee in the British Camp	1	2.5%
	Total	40	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Out of the forty sample HHs, there are many more pensioners and individuals in service in the Indian army compared to the British army due to the recruitment process in the British army being more competitive and available for a limited number of people. In the case of joining the Indian army, the individual has better odds because almost 2 thousand Gurkhas are joining annually (Defense attaché, Indian pension camp 26 March 2019).

Most of the families, 31 HHs from 40 samples HHs are following both traditional agriculture and animal husbandry occupation. However, the practice of farming and domestication of animals is declining. In fact, after joining an army the family members get relief from the dearth of the basic requirement for survival. So after being able to manage for basic requirements, they try to send their young to obtain a good education. Data shows, out of 40 samples HHs, all 7 HHs' children from in-service British Gurkha's family are pursuing their studies in Pokhara whereas 23 HHs from Indian in service and pensioners' are continuing their education in private as well as in government colleges in Pokhara and two HHs in Syangja. Therefore the data on education shows children of Gurkhas are more likely to be admitted to school rather than their colleagues who are not from an army family. Nowadays they are trying their best to join in private school according to their financial muscle.

In the case of health treatment, Gurkhas and their family are enjoying the support from respective pension welfare camps. They get medical support of up to a hundred percent according to their rank. The lower the rank of the soldier, the higher the percentage of medical facility they receive, and vice versa. Gurkhas that have served in the Indian army also have the option to receive either IC 1000 per month or the standard medical facilities. Families of Gurkhas are economically strong compared to other neighbors in that community. However, single parenting, the loneliness of old parents, and the sacrifice for social bonding are the unseen and untold parts for all Gurkhas. Women are empowered and become de-facto husband as they get opportunities to make decisions on household chores and handle remittances sent by their husband, either for investment or for household management thus such a lucrative remittance is also playing an important role in internal migration from rural to urban areas along with bringing rapid modification in a lifestyle of the Gurkhas' family and relatives.

Impact on: Traditional norms and values

Multi-locality of family, in-laws are in a natal home, and wives with schooling children in an urban area are the normal practice in Gurkhas' family. Data shows, out of forty sample households, 7 households were managed by old parents and very limited formal interaction with grandfather and grandmother. Similarly, 17 households were left under the supervision of relatives. During oral interaction, respondents talked about the reducing value of gathering by a clan in the worship of Julieta, a ceremony for new birth on the 11th day. The practice of ban in salt consumption during death rituals for 13 days my whole family has changed to only one member of the household.

Besides, freedom, autonomy, urban lifestyle, and managing remittance have temporarily changed the sex ratio of the study area. Likewise, the status and role of women have changed as male members of the family are absent and the female member gets direct authority on the spending of the remitted income. Such a circumstance in the family has empowered women

as they are exercising the decision making role in household responsibilities. Furthermore, the most energetic and youthful population is not found in the study area to conduct development activities.

Conclusion

In today's context, a huge amount of remittances, NPR.1,28,52 crores from Gurkhas are contributing as a source of foreign currency for the state and directly benefited the family. This existing practice to be Gurkhas is strong matches with the concept of migration for economic benefit. The observation also matches with the microeconomic theory where the entire family decides to be Gurkha soldiers. Poor economic condition at origin compared to the destination and vast wage difference has fascinated youths to be an employee as a Gurkha soldier. However, uncertainty in employment opportunity and the focus of seeking an opportunity abroad has been reducing the potential chance for every youth to grow as an entrepreneur.

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