

**Why They Go? How They Go? And What about those Left Behind?
A Study of Migration in Gwaldaha**

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Gaurav KC has completed his thesis entitled “**Why they go? How they go? And What about those Left Behind? A Study of Migration in Gwaldaha**” under my guidance and supervision. I, hereby, recommend this thesis for examination by the thesis evaluation committee.

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LETTER OF APPROVAL

We certify that this thesis entitled **“Why they go? How they go? And What about those Left Behind? A Study of Migration in Gwaldaha”** submitted by Mr. Gaurav KC has been approved by the thesis evaluation committee under the central department of Sociology/Anthropology, Tribhuvan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Master’s degree in Anthropology.

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Ever wondering about Wonders of Society and Culture

Gaurav K.C.

Abstract

Nepal has a long history of migration constructed with the glimpses of Trans Himalayan traders, Lahures in Ranjit Singh's army, Gurkhas in British regiments, Laborers in Indian Tea Plantation sites etc. After the people's movement of 1990, new era of Nepalese mobility started, since when, Nepalese mobility limited to India and some neighboring nations widespread to different destinations. Among different destinations, there was a high and alarming increment of Nepalese leaving to seek foreign employment in Middle East and south East Asia.

Large numbers of Nepalese labors have flown to Middle East and south East Asia in search of employment leaving their family members at home. Simple dissection of this situation highlights, among "could be several", two aspects of migration: the mobile aspect consisting of people who fly to different destinations and the sedentary aspect consisting of the left behind family members. Through an ethnographic study, with three discontinuous months of field work at *Gwaldaha*, a socio-geographical setting nearby Kathmandu, this study sought answer to three questions: why they (out migrants) go? How (the process of decision making at the household level) they go? And how about those (especially women household members) left behind (focusing consequences of absence of a household member and changes at household level due to remittance)? Using household as a unit of analysis, the focus of the study was the left behind household members of the out migrants. The selection of household as a unit of analysis is due to the trend after 1980s which have acknowledged that households are important agents to consider while explaining the reasons for migration and settlement trajectories. This study is guided by the theoretical approaches which have acknowledged that migration decisions are made jointly by family members, wherein household composition, gendered ideologies, and social contacts and networks are presented as determinants of who migrate, and who can reap profit from opportunities arising elsewhere. This study also borrows from ethnographies explaining the changes in the household level division of labor with especial focus on changes on the women's position in the household structure, due to the absence of a male out-migrant.

While exploring the reasons behind migration as perceived and shared by left behind family members of the out-migrants, the sedentary aspect of migration, this study

finds the reason blended in the notion of “*Kamaune*”. People migrate “to *Kamauna*”, *amauna*, though in the first glimpse seems an economic reason, it holds a distinct and multifaceted meaning in the local household and socio-cultural context. The notion of “*Kamaune*” is built with the building blocks of multifaceted meanings engraved into various socio-cultural layers of Nepali society. This study also finds that several rounds of negotiation and renegotiation take place within the household before the actual migration takes place. During the process of negotiation and renegotiation, members of household perform multiple roles. Migration actually is the result or outcome of this negotiation and renegotiation within the household.

While exploring the consequences of migration at the household level, this study finds that migration of the male member of the household is not just the absence of a member but also a labor force. Within the family structure every member has a role to perform division of labor guided by the household level. In the absence of the male members of a family, female members share the role performed by the male members, the consequence of which is the increase in the workloads of the women and also the changes in the culturally constructed gender roles within the household. The degree of increased workloads varies among wives who are recently married with no children, wives with children and other female members of the household. Along with the changes in the household level gender relation comes with the challenges posed by the male out migration.

While exploring the significance of remittance, this study finds that, the frequency and amount of remittance sent by the out-migrants vary with the destination and the opportunity grabbed by the out migrants. Remittance sent by out migrants poses greater significance both on the national economy and household economy. Basically, at the household level, remittance holds significance for the planned future activities assimilated in the notion of *Kamaune*. Daily consumption goods, better off education for children, spending during festivals and rituals, buying lands, construction and reconstruction of house, paying debts, and spending on agricultural works are a few grounds wherein remittance holds greater significance. Spending on these grounds has a greater socio-cultural contexts and meanings. This study claims that, migration explained and understood under traditional categories such as immigration, return migration, or Diaspora, do not incorporate the current tendency of out-migrants to visit

more than once, thus are not explanatory enough. With his claim this study argues for a need of additional category and coins 'back and forth migrants' as suitable one.

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List of Abbreviations

DFID— Department for International Development
DLEP— Department of Labour and Employment Primotion
GDP—Gross Domestic Product
GNP— Gross National Product
HMG— His Majesty’s Government of Nepal
IDS— international Development Studies
ISD— International Subscriber Dialing
NR— Nepali Rupee
OECD— Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
SLC— School Leaving Certificate
SLF— Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
STD— Subscriber Trunk Dialing
UAE__ United Arab Emirates
UTL— United Telecom Limited
UN— United Nations
US— United States
USA—United States of America
VDC — Village Development Committee