



A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON LABOUR MOBILITY AND OUT MIGRATION AMONG THE TEA TRIBES OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Migration is an important factor which changes the demographic structure of any territory. It influences the growth, composition and distribution of population of a place or region. Apart from birth and death, migration also acts as a contributor to demographic variation. Tea tribes also known as the Adivasi's are one of the backward communities in the region and they live in almost every district of Assam but their density varies according to the number of tea plantations in different places. This seminar paper outline the dynamics of labour mobility and out migration among the tea tribes of Assam, focusing on the history, socio economic condition and factors leading to out migration. The paper examines the causes of the migrant out workers, and the impact of outmigration. As the cheap labour force is one of the important factors of production, interstate labour migration balances the demand of labour to the economically well off state. The study also focuses on the volume and direction of migrant workers. Unemployment is a burning issue in the state and at the same time other state providing employment to many, attracts outmigration. The study is a based on secondary data collected from different sources like government web pages and published articles.

Keywords: Migration, Labormobility, Tea tribe, Assam, Adivasis

INTRODUCTION

Man is persistently on the move. Migration implies the phenomena of the flow of people over shorter or longer duration either for temporary or permanent settlement. Labour migration may be defined as a form of labour mobility towards districts or States or out –side where industry

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and employment are expanding. In fact, the history of population migration is as old as man itself. The vital streams of labour migration are rural –rural, urban -urban, and rural –urban.

Rural –urban migration reduces population pressure in rural areas, but economic problems remain unsolved as it is simply transferred to urban areas. The illiterate, less educated unskilled landless, agricultural migrant laborers only aggravate the pressure on the informal employment sector.

As the cheap labour force is one of the important factors of production, interstate labour migration balances the demand for labour to the economically well-off state like Maharashtra, Gujrat, Karnataka, TamilNadu, Kerela, Delhi Punjab and Haryana, supplying from the economically less progressive states namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Rajasthan. This trend has remained the same since the 1991 census (Mistri 2021).

In the 2011 census, the north east states and even West Bengal contributed substantially to the labour force supply (Mistri 2021). Although a very meager proportion, interstate migration plays a significant role in India's economic growth, and it shows unique characteristics for north east States.

The emigration of northeastern Workers to mainland Indian State implies lack of employment opportunities. Employment opportunities are inextricably linked with economic growth, considered a prerequisite for growing employment (ILO 2018). Hence employment and economic growth in the northeastern States are investigated with empirical firmness. In this backdrop, employment elasticity for north east states during 1991-2011 is estimated to relate the migration due to work /employment with economic growth in the region.

Labour migration is observed as one of the most common phenomena among the Adivasi/tribe community of Assam in last few years. Each year thousand of Adivasi youths migrate to southern state of India in particular and other parts of India. Many Adivasi youth, all through out the year migrate to different parts of India for seeking job opportunity. Each family has one or



two relative who are in southern state of India like Kerela, Bangalore, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, etc and a very few in other Indian state. Majority of Adivasi youths of the age group 18 and above

are who are basically school dropout and also the educated youth migrate to southern states of India for job.

OBJECTIVES

1. To briefly introduce the Adivasis of Assam
2. To know the socio-economic condition of the tea tribe people in Assam.
3. To analyze the factor leading to out migration of the Adivasis.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a secondary study collected from different sources like article and online sources.

THE TEA TRIBE OR THE ADIVASIS OF ASSAM: A BRIEF HISTROY

Adivasi of Assam are one of the most hardworking tea garden workers of Assam. They are also known as the tea tribes in region. They have been in Assam since the colonial period. They were brought by the British as an indenture labourer from the region of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhatisgarh, West Bengal during the period of 1860-1990s and they are now settled mostly in the district of Udalguri, Kokrajhar, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Charaideo, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. They live in almost every district of Assam but their density varies according to the number of tea plantation in different region.

There are various ethnic community and various culture among the Adivasi people, they speak different language like **kurukh, kharia, mudari, odia, sadri, santhali** etc. Sadri is common language which act as the mediator between different group. There are different ethnic group among adivasi like the Urang, Munda, Kharia, Santhali, Turi, Ghasi, Chamar



,Majhi, Sonar ,Rajbonshi, Rajput, Manki,Mahato,Kondpan, Baraik, Bauri,Gowalla, Teli, Mirdha, Koiri, Tossa,Tanti Malar, Nayak, Bhera, Kumhar ,Lohra, Pradhan, and many more .

They practice basically Hinduism, Sarnaism and Christianity. About 15% of these people have adopted Christianity, 60% are Hindu and 25%are following Sarnaism.

Festival celebrate by these people are Karam puja, Sohrai,Tusu puja, Durga puja ,Mansha puja, Fagua,Sarhul , Goodfriday and Christmas

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many researches on migrant laborers have been conducted in the Indian sub-continent. Internal migration, labour migration, remittances, obstacles, and opportunities of migration, as well as social protection program are the subject of majority of studies. The following discussion shows the literature review on labour migrant in India.

- 1) Jan Breman in his book "**Footloose labour : Working in India's informal economy**" examines the phenomena of labour bondage and provides an account of changes in the labour relations and more particularly of the changes in the labour bondage system in the contemporary India. In this book the author has considered the "**hali community**" (landless tribe) as a case in the southern part of Gujarat to analyze the changes which took place over the last 75 years.
- 2) Himmat Ratnoo in his book "**Migration of labour in India: The squatter settlements of Delhi**" analyses the decisive factors in labour migration. Based on a thorough and robust examination of migrants to three slum localities of Delhi stretching over four decades, the author examines why people migrate, the circumstances of their decision and their experience at their destination. he investigates the myths of urban policy –that "rural development will reduce migration to the cities, that growth poles can be created to divert migrant flows, that government has the power to influence significantly migration sales and directions while pursuing essentially unpredictable market-driven economic growth.
- 3) Jan Breman in his book "**Capitalism, Inequality and Labour in India**" makes a synthesis study of many research on labor bondage in India between 1962 and 2017. The



main focus was to know what has happened since the country became a sovereign state in the middle of twentieth century. To find out how labour entrapped under duress fared and how it was conceived, classified and treated over several decades it is imperative to trace the imprint left by colonial rule and the anti colonial fight on the working classes in the lower realms of what was essentially a peasant economy and society. Moreover, it is impossible to understand the phenomena of human bondage in the twenty first century without contextualizing the problem as part of a globalized economy dictated by the interest of capital at the expense of labour.

- 4) Parveen Kumar Jha in his books “Labor **in contemporary India**” examines some of the major themes relating to world of the work and workers in contemporary India while locating it in the larger trajectory of economic development since independence. This book describes the livelihood opportunities ought to be among the most important objectives on any meaningful agenda of economic development. On this front, however the Indian experience has remained seriously inadequate. During the first four decades after independence, India’s achievement with respect to the problems of poverty, unemployment and occupational structural transformation were modest at best. Since the early 1990’s during the era of neo-liberal reforms, while economic growth has remained upbeat, the wellbeing of the masses has shown even greater stress.
- 5) Amarjeet Singh and H. Shuheb Sharma “Migration **and ethnicity in north east India**”. It is a book which is a combination of many case studies in north east India. The books deal with the case study from the places like -Manipur, Sikkim, Assam.
- 6) S.N Tripathy in his book ‘**Migrant Labour in India**’ have talked about history and origin of labour migration, problems of migrant –workmen, theoretical perspectives on migration and methodological design, socio economic features of migrant and non migrant household and labour migration and its impact. The study was based on Ganjam district of Orissa, where migration is of paramount significance to national development. The study focuses on the volume and direction of inter-state migrant workers like Dadan outward migrants, Surat migrants and all other types of labour migrants along with their demographic socio-economic features. The analysis yields insight concerning population distribution and effects of migration on population growth. The analytical part has been based on data collected for the purpose through sample surveys. The study in general and



regional analysis in particular, provides a necessary base for further research into the underlying reasons of migration and its socio economics equal.

SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE REGION

The livelihood of the tea tribe people surrounds in an around the tea gardens of Assam. It is the main source of occupation of the community. A huge sum of the tea tribe people dwells in the labour lines built by the tea planter with minimum facilities. Lack of education, poverty, addiction to alcohol, poor living condition, lack of health facilities etc are their major problem of the community

The tea plantation sector in Assam is the largest provider of the industrial employment in the state. The labourer is employed on permanent or temporary basis. They are being exploited in all the possible means and are provided with minimum wages, which is merely sufficient for the survival. With the income they get in the tea gardens of Assam they cannot afford for proper education and live a healthy life.

Therefore, the young people of the community prefer to walk out of the state and seek for employment in different states of India. They basically move to the southern states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and other states. They work as a tedious labourer and financially support their families back in Assam. If we observe today, every tea tribe family in Assam has a relative who is working in the southern states and are financially supporting their families back in Assam.

SOME OF THE PROBABLE REASON OF OUT LABOUR MIGRATION

Migration happens for a multiple reason, including economic, environmental, social and political factors. The reason may vary ranging from security, demography and human rights to poverty and climate change.

Economic factor:One of the commonly cited reasons whether permanently or temporarily is economic factor. It is seen that people basically migrate from poorer developing areas into richer areas where wages are higher and more jobs are available. Therefore, the people of the



rural areas usually migrate to developed urban areas where there are more job opportunities available.

Same goes with the tea tribe people living in this region. Due to lack of job opportunities available in the region they move out of the state either temporarily or permanently in search of better job opportunities. Most importantly due to low wages provided in the tea gardens of Assam forces the people to move out of the region.

Social factors: The human needs and desires to achieve a better quality of life is one of the main social factors which enhances the growth of outward migration. They migrate basically to ensure that they donot only have the minimum salary but also important benefits and career growth prospects. By doing so they ensure that they send their children to better and safer school and to give a healthy lifestyle to their families back in Assam.

Environmental factor- Migration due to environmental factors is involuntary. As the people in this region are dependent on agriculture but due to climate change sometimes some problems like crop failure, destruction due to natural disasters force the people to migrate. As we know Assam is every year affected by flood therefore a huge number of people move out of the state every year in search of better employment.

CONCLUSION

North East India is a home to many ethnic communities. In the beginning due to availability of rich natural resources there was heavy flow of in-migration, but lately around early 2000 significant outflow of labour migration has been an observed in the region. The environmental changes, conflict situations and the political economy of livelihood are some of the important factors which lead to our migration from the region. Various studies conducted on out labour migration shows that the level of migration from rural areas is much higher than the urban areas. This is due to lack of employment and education facilities in rural areas. Therefore,proper provision must be made like adequate employment facilities, proper education etc, most importantly vocational education must be included in the rural colleges so as to give practical exposure to the rural students to get their livelihood. Migrant workers provide only a temporary relief to their family back in Assam. The migrant



laborer returned home with the hope to settle down in the region but the poverty and lack of alternative livelihood force them to return to the place of work. This oscillating condition between work place and livelihood in the villages continues.

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