

SEASONAL MIGRATION: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UMTREW AND UMPLI RIVER IN RI-BHOI DISTRICT OF MEGHALAYA

Miss. Phiralin Amy Marsing

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Science & Technology in Meghalaya
Baridua 9th, Ri Bhoi District, Meghalaya, India
Email: phiralynamy@gmail.com

Abstract: According to Deshingkar, & Start (2003) seasonal migration is a widespread phenomenon and is central to the way of life for many landless people in the remote rural areas across western, central and eastern India. While explaining the political economy which creates the context for seasonal migration, Kundu (2008) opined that the major problem currently faced by several developing countries is linked to stagnation and volatility of agriculture, India being no exception to this. Hence, the possibilities of creating livelihood opportunities outside agriculture in rural areas seem to be limited, since much of the growth in non-farm employment in many of the states has been witnessed as poverty induced. This is especially true in the case of seasonal migrants. Chandrasekhar et al. (2007) also suggest that short-term migration is distress-led, driven by the complete collapse of rural employment generation, the economic difficulties of cultivation and also inadequate employment opportunities in towns. Focus attention have been given to the seasonal sand labourer migrants who are migrated to Umtrew and Umpli Rivers of Meghalaya during the month of April, May, June and July every year. These seasonal migrants coming from different place of Assam they came and work mostly in the Byrnihat areas in the river Umtrew and River Umpli which falls in Ri Bhoi District of Meghalaya. These are the two spot where seasonal migrants migrated as their place of destination of work during this single season. Whereas in the second season the seasonal migrants they migrated from the month of September to Novemeber. During this season the migrated people they are working in the stone mining or quarrying in the same place in Ri Bhoi District of Meghalaya i.e. Killing, Baridua, Marngar, Umwang and Byrnihat area.

Key Words: Seasonal Migration; Migration Patterns; Rivers; Place of destination; Rural Areas; Landless; Job mobility.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Movement is an essential part for development of any region or country and one of the most distinguished characteristics of human being. Migration is one of the three basic components of population growth of any area, the others being fertility and mortality. It influences size, composition and distribution of population. In middle of the 20th century volume of inter-state migration in India was low due to predominance of agriculture, rigidity of the cast system, the role of joint families, the diversity of language and culture, food habits and lack of education (Chaterjee and Bose, 1997; Nair and Narain, 1985; Zachariah, 1964). As stated by Gardner and Osella (2003): “contemporary patterns of migration are not merely a result of modernisation but have long been a central feature of life.” Hence, it is not appropriate to consider all migration as prospective migration. As there is migration which helps people tremendously to make greater economic advantages while some others offer only a relative advantage. By the economic priorities of the migrants, many people migrate for accumulating wealth whereas many others migrate just for a survival. Due to many reasons, migration in India is a complex phenomenon. The nature and purpose of migration varies from place to place and people to people. When it is for earning relatively more for some people, for some others, it is only for sheer survival. Some people are pulled out by opportunities arising elsewhere where some others are desperately pushed to take up migration.

For the past three decades, livelihood debates dominate the third world discussions. Livelihood of the individual and social is a product of natural, social and economic environment and it is defined as an adequate stock and flow of food and cash to meet basic needs. Chamber and Conway’s definition of livelihood states that “a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the long and short run” (Chamber and Conway’s, 1992:7-8).

Three out of every four poor people in developing countries live in rural areas, and most of them depend directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihoods. Livelihood resources can be understood as the ‘capital base’,

from which different productive streams are desired and constructed (Scoones, 1998)² therefore livelihood is also disaggregated into a series of indicators. These indicators are identified based on an understanding that ability to pursue different livelihood strategies is dependent on the basic economic, social, tangible and intangible assets that people have in their possession. Drawing on an economic metaphor, such livelihood resources may be seen as the 'capital' base from which different productive streams are derived from which livelihoods are constructed' (Scoones, 1998:7)².

This is not to say that livelihood is not a matter of material well-being, but rather that it also includes non-material aspects of well-being. "Livelihood should be seen as a dynamic and holistic concept" (Bebbington' 1999: 2022)⁷. "A person's assets, such as land, are not merely means with which he or she makes a living: they also give meaning to that person's world. Assets are not simply resources that people use in building livelihoods: they are assets that give them the capability to be and to act. Assets should not be understood only as things that allow survival, adaptation and poverty alleviation: they are also the basis of agents' power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources". (Leo de Haan and Annelies Zoomers). The forms of migration, including international, rural-rural, rural-urban, 'economic', 'forced', and 'development-induced' migration and the often over looked dynamic interaction between forms of movement. We will touch briefly on the pastoralist literature - to indicate the variety of population movements - although generally migration researchers have not included pastoral or nomadic movements in their sphere of interest (De Hann.A (1997). Jan Breman (1978) in his article "Seasonal migration and co-operative capitalism: crushing of cane and labour by sugar factories of Bardoli" explains the life of seasonal migrant workers from Dhulia, Jalgaon and Part of Nasik (Khandeshi).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The circulation of workers between their traditional rural areas and commercial and industrial enterprises is a familiar phenomenon all over the world. The people, who face various distresses at their usual place of residence and have no resources to mitigate these distresses other than their ability to work, take up seasonal migration. Various recent studies found that the volume of distress driven seasonal migration is increasing in India, and its far-reaching consequences pose many challenges for the governments. Although panel data on seasonal migration in India is lacking, a growing number of micro-level studies have established that seasonal migration for employment is growing (see Breman, 1985; Dupont 1992; Rao, 1994; Breman, 1996; Jayaraman and Lanjouw 1998; Breman and Das 2000; Rogaly et al., 2001, Deshingkar et al., 2009).

Ben Rogaly (1998) in his paper 'Workers on the move: Seasonal migration and changing social relations in rural India' considers seasonal migration in different regions of India and argues the need for a better understanding of social and economic relations and the circumstances under which migration can affect to the benefit of poor migrant workers. Rogaly finds seasonal migration as both a part of and an outcome of the structures of social and economic relations in the Indian countryside. He examines the debate about whether women, men and children migrate seasonally because of structural preconditions, or whether it is a matter of individual choice. He argues that experiences of seasonal migrants in different regions of India are contrasted.

Teerink (1995) details the experience of Khandeshi migrants from Maharashtra, who are effectively compelled to migrate to work in sugar factories in Gujarat. For Khandeshi migrants, prior commitment to seasonal work in the Gujarat sugar harvest provides a means of subsistence, through the advances paid. Those same advances contribute to their indebtedness and dependency on the employer. Haberfeld, Yitchak; et al. (1999) examined the determinants and impact of seasonal migration based on data collected from 624 households in Dungarpur district in Rajasthan. Seasonal migrants of Dungarpur leave their village usually during October-November after harvesting rain crops and sowing winter crops and return home before the next summer season. He found seasonal migrant households are of lower education levels, lower income from agriculture, and from an inferior geographical location.

The impulse to migrate is inherent in human nature; it is an instinctual and inborn disposition and inclination to wonder and to wander in search of new opportunities and new horizons (Marsella et al. (2003). By describing the other side, Moses (2006) points out 'most people, given the opportunity, will not choose to move from their family, friends and home'. What Gunnar Malmberg (1997: 21-22) calls the 'immobility paradox' focuses attention on the vast majority of people who do not migrate despite the economic models, based on 'push' and 'pull' factors of wage and unemployment differentials, which predict that they should migrate. Migrants represent only a fraction of the global population; in other words, vast majorities of the world's population are not migrants. It is only under the most hopeless conditions that potential migrants consider the exit option, and only a fraction of these people have the character, contact and resources to carry it off. However, it is a fact that migration has been an important source of human survival and growth across the centuries.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Many studies have attempted to understand the social and economic characteristics of temporary moving population of India. Many of them have found that it is the historically disadvantaged communities such as the

Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes who are heavily represented in seasonal migration. Jan Breman (1978; 1994; 1996) one of the most celebrated author of many volumes of seasonal migration and informalisation of labour in India found that it is landless from the hinterland, who migrate seasonally. Alpa Sha (2006) considers it as an escape from caste-based exclusion and poverty. Keshri and Bhagat, (2010) propose that people with low attainments are more likely to migrate temporarily. All the three findings indicate that it is the people with little capability who take up seasonal migration.

The rural population, for the most part, consist of small and landless peasants for whom, which it have lead the poor peasant to migrated seasonally to wherever destination they got to support their family during the time where there was no other job for them to work in their native place but to migrated to other destination to earn their livelihood. We have witnessed the coming of seasonal migrants to Umtrew River and Umpli River which is located in the Byrnihat area in Ri Bhoi District of Meghalaya. These two River are the main spot were the availability of sand have been found during the monsoon season which have lead to the flow of seasonal migrants to migrates into this place. The sand which is one of the raw materials which is used in building and construction of different purposes especially in this era where buildings are continuously constructed and the needs for such as raw materials is important. This two rivers are the famous spot for supplying the materials through different place in an around the district and in the states of Assam in 6 Mile, Khanapara, Ganesguri, Zoo Road, Beltola, Goru Bazar, Panja Bari, Hati Gaon and Jorabad site. The available of sand from the river during the monsoon season have influence great number of seasonal labour workers to reach the destination. There were coming through road transportation. This seasonal migrants are coming from the State of Assam through the agent or contractor who have an idea over this kind of labourer which belong from the state of Assam, whom the owner of the sand quarry from the working site i.e. Meghalaya who has been appointed him for searching and looking of these kind of labourer and having a relationship them. Migration decisions depend on multiple factors including an individual's gender and position within a social network (Curran & Saguy 2001; Lawson 1998). The agent or contractor takes care upon these seasonal migrants during this season for bringing and sending back to these migrants. And even in distributing their salary and advance payment for them to come back during the next season. Since the availability of job into this destination for the seasonal migrants is suited for them even during the time or season for working as sand labourer and stone mining they have a choice of migrated. As pointed out by Rogaly (1998), experiences of seasonal migrants in different regions of India are contrasted. For instance, seasonal migrant workers in West Bengal in eastern India seem to experience a greater degree of choice, however, in Western India, seasonal migration is mostly distress driven in nature.

4. CHARACTERISTIC OF THE SEASONAL MIGRATION:

Most of the migrants they came from the state of Assam, they belong from Morigaon, Sonapur, Jhalukbari, Dhubri and Borpeta. The migrants fall under single community i.e. under Muslim community. The seasonal migrants most of them are nuclear family which consists of four to five members in one household. Single male migrants migrated from the house the minimum age of them are around 30 to 35 where as the elder male migrants are 40-50. When it comes of education rate most of them are illiterate while very few among them are literate. The family of the seasonal migrants who are left out in the native place majority of them they were unemployed they were staying at home taking care of the family and doing the domestic work. Since it is a seasonal migrant and the nature of work which they are performing was not suited for the women and short term of duration of migrated due to that the females they were not migrated for seasonal migration.

5. RENUMERATION:

The seasonal migrants workers presently they earn with an income of 7000-8000 per month at the destination of their working place. The duration of working from 4am to 6pm. One third of the salary the single male migrant's used to divide the money by keeping for him around 2000 for buying his basic necessities requirement like food for one month. Whereas the remaining money 6000 he used to send back to his family who are staying in the native place for running the family. The mode of sending the money to their family was through the hands of the migrated friends who belong from the same native place and working together as migratory group. When anyone from them happens to go home for some important work during that time they used to send the money back.

The seasonal migrants spent the money mostly in purchasing food item and education school fees for their children there was no money left for investment they have to spend what they got.

6. REASON FOR MIGRATION:

Most of the seasonal migrants background they lack economic prosperity. There are hardly any possibilities for earning a living into their place except on agricultural work which is not enough for the whole year but only during season of cultivation and harvesting. Srivastava (1998) reports 'on the whole, micro studies on migration in India suggest push factors like inequality in land ownership, poverty and agricultural backwardness responsible for out-migration.' Deshinkar (2010) found that growing level of inequality and uneven growth has resulted in the large section of the population being excluded or adversely incorporated. Many of these people belong to remote rural areas

and are chronically poor. They routinely migrate for work to smooth consumption, repay debts and invest in health and agriculture. There are no other rewarding economic activities available and thus, these seasonal migrants face chronic unemployment and problems to run the family but the only decision was to migrate as seasonal migrants for the male members. Their poverty forces them to hire out their labour elsewhere wherever place they got so as to earn their livelihood. Since most of the seasonally labourers are living in the poor condition. Gidwani et al., (2003) also found in the same line and reported that seasonal migration has become a way of covering the income shortfall. They opined that circular migration also helps the migrants at least temporarily to undercut the undesired roles thrust upon them by history.

7. CONCLUSION:

There are various explanations for the causes of migration. There are pull factors that motivate people to migrate, and there are push factors that compel people to take up migration. If migration takes place due to pull factors (pull by better opportunities and hope) it is said that the migration is voluntary. At the same time when the migration is driven by push factors (push of misery and powerlessness), the migration is said to be involuntary. This denotes the extreme economic and often social hardships and is undertaken mostly by landless or households having little land, unskilled and illiterate poor labourers. As far as seasonal migration is concerned, several studies conducted by Breman in Gujarat and Rogaly's and others in West Bengal analyse the causes for labourers to leave the place of origin. Their findings show that several influential socio-economic and cultural factors motivate people to depart from their usual place of residence. Poverty is seen as the main factor causing labourers to leave their villages. Poverty explained as insufficient income is associated with a lack of decent employment opportunities within the village and with a low wage.

Seasonal migration from rural place who are poor is a process in which the male members single migrants from the family periodically leave his permanent residence in search of wage employment, he have to stay away from his home for a period up to four months and then return to his homes. It is a massive event that occurs in every monsoon season (April to July), where single male migrated move to other endowed areas for job requirement so as to support his family from hunger. Thus, it can be said that seasonal migration from rural areas to Meghalaya is to a large extent by the socially disadvantaged communities. Further, it is also found that most of the migrants are jobless in their own native place they are either landless or having only marginal land of less than one acre for cultivation of rice. It suggests that seasonal migration from rural Assam is largely by households who own fewer assets. These facts lead us to assume that seasonal migration from rural Assam is mostly by the people of lower social and economic strata which have make them to take other kind of job as seasonal migration to other states.

Seasonal migrant are found with less asset holding and thus, they have to do a mix of job to manage their survival in the destination area like working as sand labourer or in the stone mining. It is not possible for many landless households to get regular wage employment after season of working as wagers labourer during cultivation of rice at their own native plae. For those who migrants who engage in own cultivation which has no immediate return making them virtually unemployed they too take of the decision for seasonal migration. The only option left for them is to receive an advance to take up migration.

REFERENCES:

1. Agozino, B. (2000). Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Migration Research: Interdisciplinary, Intergenerational and international perspectives. Aldersshot: Ashgate.
2. Black, Richard, Bennett, Stephen R. G. Thomas, Sandy M. & Beddington, John R. (2011). Climate change: Migration as adaptation Nature 478 (7370), 447- 449.
3. Bhagat, R.B. (2010). Internal Migration in India: are underprivileged migrating more?, Asia Pacific Population Journal, 25, 27-45.
4. Breman, J. (1978). Seasonal migration and crushing of cane and of labour by sugar factories of Bardoli. Economic & Political Weekly, 13, pp1317-1360.
5. Chandrasekhar, C.P. & Ghosh, J. (2007). Dealing with short-term migration. Business Line, 25 September
6. deHaan, A. (2002). Migration and Livelihoods in Historical Perspective: A Case Study of Bihar, India. TheJournal of Development Studies 38(5), 115–42.
7. De Hann, A. (1997), "Migration and Sustainable Livelihoods", IDS Working Paper No.65, Sussex, UK.
8. Deshingkar, P., & Start, D. (2003). Seasonal Migration for Livelihood in India: Coping, Accumulation and Exclusion (Working paper 220). London: Overseas Development Institute.
9. Haberfeld, Y., Menaria, R.K., Sahoo, B.B., & Vyas, R. N. (1999). Seasonal Migration of Rural Labour in India. Population Research and Policy Review, 18(5), 471-487.
10. Keshri, K., & Bhagat, R. B. (2012). Temporary and Seasonal Migration in India: Regional Pattern, Characteristics and Associated factors. Economic and Political Weekly, 47(4), 81–88.
11. Keshri, K., & Bhagat, R. B (2010). Temporary and Seasonal Migration in India. Genus, 66(3).

12. Korra, V. (2011). Short-duration Migration in India. In S. I. Rajan (Eds), Migration Identity and Conflict. New Delhi: Routledge.
13. Maharatna, Arup (2003). Brighter side of Seasonal Migration: Fertility
14. Oberai, A. S., &Bilborrow R. E. (1984). Theoretical Perspectives on Migration, in Bilborrow, R. E., Oberai, A. S. & Standing G. (Eds.), Migration Surveys in Low-Income Countries, (pp. 14-30). London: Croom-Helm.
15. Transition among Santals in Rural West Bengal. Economic and Political Weekly, 38(35).
16. Richard Startup (1971). A Sociology of Migration? The Sociological Quarterly, 12(2) pp. 177-190