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Socio-Economic and Educational Perspectives of Short-Term Migration in Tribal Areas: A Case Study of Selected Tribal Households of Koraput District, Odisha

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Abstract: *The study intended to investigate into the phenomenon of short-term migration among tribal people in Koraput district of Odisha, i.e. the study area, with reference to its impact on the socio-economic status as well as education of children of migrant tribal households. Case study research design was employed in carrying out the study. Two tribal households of the study area were studied mainly to assess the effects of short-term migration on the family of migrants, particularly with reference to: (i) Income of household; (ii) Education of children; (iii) Health status/care of family members; (iv) Security of family members; (v) Attitude of community members towards migrant family; and (vi) Social relations. The study mainly revealed that migration, although enhances financial strengths of the migrant households, brought a lot of hardships, including social and emotional, to the family members who are left behind. Moreover, migrants are invariably exploited by the contractors as well as owners at the worksites.*

Keywords: *Short-term migration, Migrant households, Work site*

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Backdrop

Odisha is one of the backward States of India. The economy of Odisha is predominantly depends upon agricultural performance. This sector is crucial to the development of the State. The prevalence of small farmers having small sized land holdings, seasonal unemployment, the non-application of modern technology in agriculture in Odisha had forced the people to search for alternate sources of livelihood. People of the rural areas migrate to urban areas within and outside their districts and also to the neighboring States. The data on migration released by the Government of India (2005), based on the Census of 2001, show that

migration has increased, with 30 per cent of the population or 307 million people classified as migrants. Some villagers migrate in order to supplement their family income during seasons when local work is unavailable. However, among the landless, small and marginal farmers belonging to Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Communities, migration as a survival strategy is far more common.

In economic parlance, migration is perceived as when a person is engaged or likely to engage in a remunerative activity in a place of which he is not a native or national. Migration is a social, economic and universal phenomenon in modern times through which human being move from one place to another in pursuit of certain cherished objectives like avenues of better employment, better wages, better working and living conditions, better quality of life and better livelihood. Migration becomes objectionable only when the element of freedom in movement is replaced by coercion and the migrant workers are subjected to exploitation leading to deprivation of the irreducible barest minimum to which every worker as a human being and a citizen is entitled. It becomes objectionable when human greed, selfish and acquisitive instincts over take the noble aspects of human character such as kindness, compassion, justice and equity. In the entire chain of migration, there is a positive consequence on financial flows in the source area. However, it neglects various types of mental, physical and social challenges which a migrant come across at the destination and also his family in the source area.

Migration in Koraput District

Odisha is regarded as the homeland of the tribal having a total tribal population of about 7 million, which is 22.21 per cent of the State's total population according to Census. Koraput alone accounts for more than 25 per cent of the tribal population of the State. Studies show that migration of labourers, particularly among the tribals, has a steady increase in the district of Koraput despite implementation of a number of poverty alleviation programmes. This is caused by, *inter alia*, the inter-related factors like inadequate food security, lack of local work, low wages or late payment of wages, landlessness and displacement, deforestation, poor agricultural production, lack of irrigation and drought, and indebtedness. Migration in Koraput district is increasing with a sharp upward curve, in fact doubling from 2006 to 2007 and rising another 25% by 2008, an alarming trend (Reported in Giri et al., 2008-09). In the last ten to twelve years, the district of Koraput has sent an increasing number of distressed migrants to other areas and this trend is rapidly increasing. However, the trend of migration of the whole family is not prevalent in Koraput. Generally it is seen that the living condition of these migrant labour is sub-standard and unhygienic. Sometimes they are forced to do such jobs which are unsafe and dirty in nature. Most migrants are individual labourers who migrate for a short period during non-agricultural season because of non-availability of work in the villages. This is known as short-term migration. According to the findings of a recent research in Odisha, the majority of migrants from the State are circular migrants (Reported in Jena, 2012). This creates a big scope for the emergence of labour contractors and their services to meet emerging labour needs in various development works in and out of the State. In a survey, Action Aid estimates that nearly 2, 00, 000 people migrate from western Odisha to brick kilns surrounding major cities of Andhra Pradesh (Action Aid, 2005). In a similar study under the DFID-funded Western Odisha Rural Livelihoods Project (WORLP) in the

undivided Koraput district, STs and SCs were found dominating the migration population (Panda, 2006). Out of a sample of 100, Jena (2012) records 70 percent ST migrants from Koraput to Andhra Pradesh. The migrant labourers work under inhuman condition, become underpaid, underfed, and physically tortured (Purty, 2013). Similar findings have also been reported by Pradhan (2013) in a case study conducted in Lamtaput block of Koraput district; and Giri et al. (2008-09) in a comprehensive study conducted in four blocks of Koraput district. The findings of all these studies on migration of tribal people, *inter alia*, raise the following questions that need further research.

Research Questions

The phenomenon of short-term migration, when analyzed from a socio-economic perspective, raises a number of questions that need to be answered through systematic investigation. This study seeks to find out the answers to the following questions that are based on the outcomes of the earlier studies on migration conducted by the researchers, particularly among the tribal people of the study area:

- i. What is the socio-economic status (e.g. standard of living, education, income, movable and immovable property) of the tribal households of the study area, i.e. Koraput District, who use to migrate for work from time to time?
- ii. What are the major factors contributing to the short-term migration among tribal people of the study area?
- iii. How does short-term migration among tribal people of the study area affect the member of the households left behind, particularly with reference to the income of household, education of children, health status/care of family members, security of family members, attitude of community members towards migrant family, and social relations?

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To study the socio-economic status of migrant tribal households of the study area, i.e. Koraput District.
- ii. To study the factors associated with the short-term migration among tribal households of the study area.
- iii. To study the impact of short-term migration on the socio economic status of tribal households of the study area.

Methodology

Case study research design (Merriam, 1988) was employed in carrying out the study. The details of research methodology are discussed as follows under selection of the case, tools and techniques used for collection of data, variable of the study, and techniques of data analysis:

Selection of the Case

For the purpose of the present study, a tribal household from which one or more members use to migrate in order to support and/or strengthen family income constitute the case; and that is the unit of the study. Two such tribal households were selected employing purposive or criterion based sampling technique (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984; Reported in Merriam,

1988). Thus, each of the two tribal households studied here are in fact two independent studies.

Tools and Techniques Used for Collection of Data

The tools of qualitative research such as, family information schedule, semi-structured interviews, observation, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are employed to collect data from multiple sources at the source of migration. The investigator used multiple methods of collecting data, i.e. combining dissimilar methods to collect the data from the same unit so as to establish/ascertain the credibility of the research data. The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another ... (Denzin, 1970; Reported in Merriam, 1988, p.69). In practice, data are collected by the investigators through personal visits to the field and personal contact with the respondents using a checklist of observations and questions addressed to key informants and situation. Extensive field notes are made, photographs are taken, and interviews with key informants were conducted.

Variables of the Study

The study sought mainly to assess the effects of short-term migration on the family of migrants, particularly with reference to the: (i) Income of household; (ii) Education of children; (iii) Health status/care of family members; (iv) Security of family members; (v) Attitude of community members towards migrant family; and (vi) Social relations.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The data collected through the family information schedule were put to the qualitative analysis of thick descriptions. In addition, the data collected through discussions, interviews, observation, and field notes in respect of the case were used to supplement and/or substantiate the qualitative analysis of thick descriptions.

Profile of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Lamataput Block of Koraput District, Odisha. Three tribal households, one each from three villages, namely Malipeta, Ranitota, and Peta, were purposively selected for For the purpose of primary source information this study was concentrated in three sample villages of Lamataput Block namely Peta, Malipeta and Ranitota of Koraput District. All the sample villages selected mainly constitute a tribal community called “Mali”, whose main occupation is cultivation of agricultural products. Most of them cultivate the seasonal vegetables like tomato, beans, cabbage and cauliflower etc. From the past couple of years there is an increasing trend of migration in these areas. The present study focuses on understanding the grassroots realities pertaining to the causes and consequences of migration through in-depth case study.

Results of Case Studies

In this section, the results of five case studies of tribals, who frequently migrate for a short period of time to nearby States are presented. The results presented here are based on the data collected about the cases through observation and discussions along a schedule.

Case Study I: Case Study of Mangulu Gatar

Mangulu Gatar is a resident of Ranitota village of Lamtaput Block, Koraput district. He is at his twenty one years of age family. Ranitota is at a distance of about five kms. from the Panchayat headquarters and 20 kms. from the Block headquarters. The village is named after the rest house of the queen of Jeypore being situated in the village. The village road is *Pucca* with cements. Mangulu started going out to work when he attained the age of 17 to supplement his family income. For the last two years he has been going to Kerala State with a team of workers. His job is to assist the skilled mason in the construction of large buildings there at the destination. He along with his mates goes out through a contractor of his village. He normally stays there for two months a year. He earns around Rs. 5000/- per month.

Family Status/ History

The family of Mangulu Gatar consists of four members, including him. Mangulu's father Sh. Daitary Gatar works as a homeguard in his village and his mother Ms. Samary Gatar works as a cook in the Anganwadi centre of his village. His wife Baidai Gatar aged 19 stays at home and manages household chorus. Mangulu stopped his schooling after completion of class-VII due to the financial difficulties of his family.

Income and Savings

Mangulu's family has three sources of income, viz. income of his father as homeguard of Rs. 6000/- per month; income of his mother, as cook, of Rs. 4,000/- per month; and his own income of around Rs. 7,000/- per month from construction work. Thus, the annual income of his family from all these sources taken together is reported to be around Rs. 17,000/-per month. Mangulu has opened a savings account in a bank; and he has savings of nearly a lakh.

Movable and Immovable Property

Mangulu Gatar has a good *pucca* house with three rooms. The house is enough for his family. His house is well equipped with a wall clock, a chair, a cycle, a television, a fan and a cot/bed. He has brought few household articles/usables from Kerala. He has no land for agriculture purpose.

Causes of Migration

Discussion with Mangulu Gatar and his family members regarding the causes of his temporary migration to Kerala for work revealed that he does not find work round the year; and the daily wages here in the locality is quite less. His father faces difficulties to manage the family with the income of Rs. 6,000/- he earns from his job. Mangulu, therefore, goes out in search for work to earn money, save more, construct good house and utilize his time when he is off from agricultural activities.

Issues and Problems of Migration

Discussion with Mangulu Gatar, his parents and his wife regarding the problems he and/or his family members face at the destination and/or source station (village) of migration, during his absence at home, revealed the following facts:

- He, being the youngest member of his team of workers, feels isolated in the workplace.
- He is not able to enjoy the festivals and rituals in the workplace.
- He uses to spend more money on food, dress, health and shelter at the destination.
- The contractor, who arranges everything for him at the destination of migration, often exploits him financially. The contractor does not pay as per the agreement done.
- He remains in mental pressure when period of stay is longer.
- He does not feel comfortable at the work place.
- He is looked down by others at the destination being the youngest member of the team.
- His income adds to the comfort of the rest of his family members.

Case Study II: Case Study of Rama Kirsani

Rama Kirsani resides in Peta village of Lamtaput Block, Koraput District. He is aged 21 years, the elder son of his family. Peta village is also the Grama Panchayat headquarters. It is about 15 kms. from the Block headquarters. The village road is *kuchha* with ups and downs. Since last three years he has been going to different places within and outside the state of Odisha for work to earn the livelihood of his family. But for last two years he has been going to Hyderabad with a team for brick work. The team consists of four to five members of his locality. A Contractor of nearby village arranges everything for his team, including travel, work, and residential accommodation at the destination. He normally stays there for three months in a year. He is paid a sum of Rs. 5000/- per month. For rest of the year, he does agricultural work in his own field.

Family Status/ History

The family of Rama Kirsani consists of four members, including him, his elder daughter aged five, his younger daughter aged three years old, and his wife Bhagabati Kirsani aged 28. Both Rama and his wife are illiterate.

Income and Savings

Presently, Ram's family has two sources of income, viz. income of around 4,000/- thousand from agriculture; and income of around Rs. 15,000/- from brick work at Hyderabad. Thus, the annual income of his family from all these sources taken together is reported to be around Rs. 19,000/-. The agricultural produce such as rice, ragi, corn, vegetables he gets from his own field are normally consumed by the members of his family. Most part of his income is spent towards purchase of dress, medicine, house-hold goods; repair/construction of house; and performing rituals.

Movable and Immovable Property

Ram Kirsani has a *Kuchha* house with two rooms, which is manageable for his family. There is no space around his house. No costly gadgets were found in his house other than two chairs, wall clock, torch light, wrist watch. He has $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of agricultural land which is the

only dependable source for the maintenance of his family. He does not have animal resources or any savings account in a bank.

Causes of Migration

Discussion with Ram Kirsani regarding the causes of his temporary migration to Hyderabad for work revealed that he does not find work round the year; and the daily wages here in the locality is quite less. He gets more wages while he works outside of the State. He faces difficulties to manage his family with this income. He, therefore, goes out in search for work to earn more money, save more, construct good house.

Issues and Problems of Migration

Discussion with Ram Kirsani and his wife regarding the problems he and/or his family members face at the destination and/or source station (village) of migration, during his absence at home, revealed the following facts:

- His elder daughter, who studies in class I is irregular in attending school.
- Family members are not secured in his village; an elderly woman sleeps in his house daily.
- Due to long absence in the village, his relationship with his relatives and friends became weak; his wife is not able to attend all the functions.
- He uses to spend more money on food, dress, health and shelter at the destination.
- He is not able to enjoy the festivals and rituals at the destination.
- He faces a lot of difficulties in the maintenance of his health at the destination, where he falls ill frequently.
- The contractor, who arranges everything for him at the destination of migration and also provides cash advance, or subsistence payment; and the owner of the work site exploit him financially. They do not pay his wages regularly.
- He often remains in mental pressure as his wife pressurizes him not to go to such a distant place for work.
- The residential accommodation and other arrangements at the destination is very poor.
- Extra income helps him to meet consumption needs when his own food stock is exhausted.
- His savings has increased substantially consequent upon his migration to Hyderabad.

Findings of the Study

The findings in respect of each of the two case studies presented above are presented as follows:

Findings Pertaining to the Case Study II: Case Study of Mangulu Gatar

- i. Mangulu Gatar migrates for work to enhance the comfort of his family members.

- ii. Extra income attracts Mangulu Gatar to migrate to Kerala, although he is not comfortable there.
- iii. Migration is reported to bring a lot of hardship, including social and emotional, to Mangulu Gatar and his family members, who are left behind during his migration.
- iv. The contractor exploits him at the destination by paying less than the agreement done at the source.
- v. The workplace is hazardous.
- vi. Migration has enhanced the financial strengths of Mangulu's family.

Findings Pertaining to the Case Study II: Case Study of Rama Kirsani

- i. Ram Kirsani is forced to migrate to Hyderabad for work due to financial reason. Extra income attracts Ram Kirsani to migrate to Hyderabad although he is not comfortable there.
- ii. Ram Kirsani's wife Bhagabati Kirsani prefers to stay in distress rather than to send her husband out to work.
- iii. The destination of migration does not suit Ram Kirsani on many ground, e.g. clumsy atmosphere, poor sanitary conditions. He falls ill there regularly.
- iv. Ram Kirsani is financially exploited by both the contractor and owner of the work site at the destination.

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