

Understanding the Dynamics of Migrant Labourers in Unorganised Sector: A Study of KBK Districts of Odisha

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ABSTRACT:

This main intention of this research paper is to highlight the miserable conditions of the people of KBK Districts of Odisha who frequently migrated to the nearby states like Chhatisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat and Maharashtra to earn their livelihood by working in the unorganized sectors like brick kiln industries, construction sites, pulling rickshaw, working in textile industries. Migration is a very common phenomenon in KBK districts since last three decades. In this context, the research paper highlights the plight of the migrant workers in their destination place and tries to investigate the causes behind the repeated migration in this area even after seventy five years of independence. Further, this research paper will try to identify why the government machineries and their policies are unable to address this migration issue in the KBK region of Odisha?

Key Words: *Migration, Under-development, Poverty, Seasonal Migrants, Distress*

INTRODUCTION:

Migration is not a new phenomenon in the human history. It is prevalent all over the world and it becomes a common phenomenon having a common trend in the modern day society. It is observed that people keeping in high ambition in their mind migrate from one place to another for a permanent or temporary settlement, whatever it may be, to a new geographic location. Their movement may be a long distance like one country to another or within the country. But all these depend on the profession of the concerned people. People migrate individually or single, sometimes with entire family members or with large groups with a group leader. Hence, migration is a universal phenomenon which is in practice in all parts of the globe and it has been widely acknowledged as the common trends of the present day society. It has been treated as one of the most important strategy adopted by the people for centuries in the face of natural or human-caused disasters.

Generally, there are two categories of people migrate. One group of people those who are in a better standard

of living and they migrate to other places with an expectation to get more benefits in economic sphere in comparison to their present standard of living. The second group of people who belong to poor or poverty stricken, migrate due to their hunger, starvation and lack of access to resources, frequently affected by the natural calamities like flood and famine in their respective living areas. The migration unleashed by the first category, gives pleasure and the migrated people lead a very comfortable life. But the second category of migration

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always brings tears and unhappy. Various compelling factors like loosing of their jobs, livelihood, and without getting any alternative for their survival, people are forced to migrate other places leaving their own ancestral property and native place. Further, the main cause of migration is found due to disparities in regional development with underdevelopment strategy related to economy, trade, and industrial growth. As reported by the different studies inter-state migration is found in a larger way in India.

The KBK regions are the migration prone areas of the state of Odisha. Very often people of these districts migrate to far away states of Maharashtra, Chhatisgarh, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and work various unorganized sectors like, textile industry, pulling rickshaw, working in the construction sites and brick kiln factory and thereby earn their livelihood. The situation is very alarming and it clearly indicates that there is a serious livelihood uncertainty in this region.

The available figures indicate that every year three lakhs people migrate from the KBK districts of Odisha. It is a great problem where a sizeable number of people are facing socio-economic problem since last three decades. This region must be taken care of both by the union and state government to eradicate livelihood uncertainty of the people.

The **Core Objective** of the study is to highlight the problem of the migration of this region. Further, to focus the socio-economic conditions of the migrant labourers both male and female, those who are working far away in the brick kiln industry. The study will also examine the most important factors of migration which is very common phenomena in the KBK districts of Odisha. The major effects of migration among migrant labourers of these areas will be explored in details. Beside this, the study will also analyse and explore the human rights violations of the migrant labourers in their destination. Finally, the study will put forward some suggestion and remedial approach to bring an end to this problem of migration in KBK regions forever.

The Socio-Economic Profile of KBK Districts of Odisha:

The new word “KBK Districts” came into limelight in 1992-93 which comprises of eight districts named, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Sonepur, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Koraput. This is a vast underdeveloped areas of these eight districts having 14 Sub-Divisions, 37 Tehsils, 80 Community Development

Blocks, 1,437 Gram Panchayats and 12,293 villages (Report of Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2011). The majority of the inhabitants of KBK districts lives in remote rural areas which is one of the most backward and poorest regions of India. A good number of national survey relating to poverty reveals that 87.14 percent of people live in acute poverty. The people of this region succumbed to hunger, poverty, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, inadequate calorie intake, sanitation, poor housing facilities and lack of communication net work for which they cannot join in the national mainstream of the nation (Report of IIT Kanpur 2009). It is also a matter of great concerned that till now the people is weak access to health, education, drinking water, electricity and transport facilities. One of the important international study reports reveals that 71.9% families of KBK regions are living below poverty line (NSS 2000).

From geographical point of view the KBK regions are situated in high-lands and the topography of the region clearly points out that all the KBK districts comprises mainly hilly and barren. All the eight districts of KBK are situated very distance places from the capital city of Bhubaneswar which is the main centre of socio-economic and political development of this KBK region. So far as the area of the KBK region is concerned it covers 31% of total geographical area of the state (Dist. Statistical Report 2000). But it is a matter of great regret that there is no significant development of communication network in KBK district.

The KBK districts are inhabited predominantly by backward classes like Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes. A vast majority of 38.72% of Tribal Communities are living in this region. The primitive tribes like, Dadai, Bondas, Sauras, Langia, Koys, Paroja and Dangaria Kandhas are living in KBK regions. In addition to this, 16.2% population belongs to Scheduled Castes (SC) communities (Report of Institute of Social Studies 2010). Thus, a large chunk of the population belongs to tribal communities in KBK Districts. It is the most vulnerable region of the country. The most shocking incidents like selling of child and starvation death are the major incident which occurred in 1990s from this region. It could draw the attention of the both print and electronic media of both national and international level.

Recently, the Planning Commission of India had undertaken a study to identify the poorest district of the country measuring the high level of existence of poverty, facilities of agricultural productivity per worker and

agricultural wage rate and the total number of existing scheduled tribe and scheduled caste communities. It was found that the entire KBK districts are coming under this category (Report of Planning Commission 2000). It needs wholehearted and concerted efforts for the overall development of the region. The Ex-Prime Minister of India Sri Narasimha Rao initiated a holistic development project in 1993 to eradicate the poverty from this region and thereby the KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) projects came to the limelight.

The Gloomy Pictures of Migration in KBK Districts:

The story of migration is very old in this region and the people are accustomed with these activities since last thirty years. Due to livelihood uncertainty near about more than three lakh people with their family members starts their journey in mid-September to far away states of Gujarat, Chhatisgarh, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. The migrant people could not take their old and infirm parents with them which is a matter of great pathetic and painful. These old people remain alone in their home with the blessing of God. Though most of the people are not highly educated and most of them are illiterate also they always work in the unorganized sectors like, brick kiln industries, apartment construction, weaving, pulling rickshaw and also involved in plumber work (Sarangi 2021). Their returning journey starts from their destination to home in the month of June. Most of the people suffer physically and mentally in their destination place and the entire narratives are published in the both print and electronic media too.

The information received from the ground level from the migrant labourers through Focused Group Discussion (FGD) reveals that the migrants workers have to labour hard in their destination place remaining in a very unpleasant situation, unhygienic conditions having no proper house, medical facilities, safe drinking water and other adequate humane conditions of living. Their human rights are grossly violated in their destination place.

All the migrant related activities are informal in nature and it cannot find a place in the census data. Further, though they always work in the unorganized sectors like, brick kiln industry, apartment construction, weaving, pulling rickshaw and other activities their location of work place and personal details are not coming in the

domain of government regulations and labour laws (Sarangi 2021).

It is observed that the people those who are interested to work in the construction sectors usually prefers to go distance places like Goa, Chennai and Mumbai to earn their livelihood. Some people also work in Raipur, the capital city of Chhatisgarh as rickshaw pullers and peddlers. Generally, most of the people of these groups are illiterate and lack of technical knowledge having no capacity to work in the formal sector. The most downtrodden and poverty stricken people always visits the peripheries of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and work in the brick kiln industries. They migrate with their family members with an expectation of higher income and easy livelihood. They have to labour hard without bothering for their own health conditions. The people those who work in the weaving sector always prefer to go Gujarat and work in the cities of Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Jam Nagar.

Causes of Migration in KBK Districts:

KBK Districts are underdeveloped in nature. In search of livelihood people of this region migrate to other states. According to Migration theory people are migrated to other places due to push factors and pull factors. But, in KBK region the most important factors which drives people for migration are, small size of agricultural holdings or non-agricultural land, lack of enough non-agricultural jobs in the villages in the lean period, non-availability of jobs in the respective areas, over all backwardness of the area and above all the expectation of the people for higher income at outside. The main question arises here is that why people of these areas frequently migrate to other states to earn their livelihood? Whether the existing interventions of the Government is not sufficient to address the problem of migration in KBK region.

The KBK districts are predominantly agrarian in nature having more than seventy per cent of population depends on agriculture to earn their livelihood. The agriculture of the districts are mostly depends on rain water. In case of failure of monsoon rain there is no alternative for the farmers to run their paddy crops. Very often the KBK districts meet drought like situations due to lack of monsoon rain which gives a great set back to the financial conditions of the people. It gives a severe threat to their livelihood. The scanty rainfall and low level of irrigation facilities are highly inadequate to meet the agricultural needs of the farming communities. It is

observed that a large chunk of crop lands are not getting sufficient irrigation facilities and only 26% of total areas of KBK is irrigated as compared to 33% of the state (Sarangi 2021). Hence, the livelihood uncertainty also becomes a major cause of migration in KBK.

In most of the study it is confirmed that the migrant people are not well to do people and they have to work hard for their survival. As a social being, they have also to perform a number of social obligations including the marriage of their son and daughter, construction of their own house from thatched to pucca house and to perform other social work in their villages. To meet these urgent requirements most of the time they make an agreement with the Migrant Contractor (Dadan Sardar) and receive a lump sum amount in advance. As per the agreement the migrants labourers are forced to work in the outside state in the brick kiln industries and always work under the strict vigilance of the Migrant Contractors. There are so many instances of brutal exploitation of the migrants in their destination places. In such a compelling situation the migrants cannot get any alternative for way out, but bears all the tortures inflicted upon them.

The Plight of Migrant Labourers:

It is very difficult to express the sorrows and sufferings of the migrants in their destination place. The migrants expect more earning in their destination place and migrate to unknown places with their family members. But in working place they experience sad realities which they never thought. In their destination place they have to suffer health problem, in conducive living, underpayment, hard work and brutality and abuse of females and absence of caring children (Sarangi 2021).

In addition to this, the migrant labourers work hard in the unorganized sectors in their destination place for their own livelihood and for higher income. But they cannot get quality nutrition food and severely affects with serious health problems. Further, no proper medical treatment is available in their destination place. Both parents and their children also equally suffered mentally and physically. They are under nourished and exploited brutally with a pressure to long hours of work in their place of working. The children could not get the opportunities of schooling and become illiterate forever.

Another serious important issue comes to the lime light of the migrant labourers that the migrants very often face food insecurity. The ration card which is provided to them in their respective state government will no

longer work in their destination place. They cannot get the facilities of public distribution system in their destination place due to their temporary resident of that concerned state and most painful thing is that they also lose their PDS entitlements due to their long absence from their respective villages. Further, they are unable to participate in the political process of the country including election and census study in their home state. (Sarangi 2021). To ascertain their knowhow is also very difficult task as they always work in the remote area which is far away from public living place.

The Plight of Migrant Women Labourers:

The women of KBK region of Odisha are leading a very measureable life. The women are less educated than the male as well as the state and national average. It is estimated that only 29.1% of women are literate in KBK region. Women health care facilities are not sufficient to lead a decent life. Due to lack of proper health care system the women suffer a number of diseases including high morbidity on account of under-nutrition as well as endemic malaria and other waterborne and skin diseases. The women also cannot get a fair wage as compare to their male counterpart. The statistical data of the Odisha Government clearly indicates that 90% of rural women supplemented their income through non-timber forest produces and 50% of rural women involve in agro-based activities like, collection of various forest produces, kendu leaf, Mahul and Broom (Statistical Reports 2000). Thus, the position of women in KBK regions is not conducive both in social and economic sphere.

The plight of women in their destination place is unimaginable and inexpressible. They suffer brutally in the work field. Maximum women are uneducated and work as unskilled labour. There are so many instances of paying low wages to them and they are the part of the unorganized sector. The women are engaged in so many work including construction sites, brick kiln industry and also in weaving. While working in the personal building construction sites, the women render hard work with carry loads of bricks and cement mix and always involve in sorting and chipping of stones and other painstaking work. The owners always exploit them brutally and never pay the adequate remuneration fixed for women workers. It is observed from the various studies that the women are the worst sufferers in the destination place. A good number of women are also infected with HIV Positive, Cancer and other fatal disease (Sarangi 2021). All this pictures indicates that

there is a gross violation of women human rights in their destination places.

Government Initiatives:

KBK region is a migration prone area of the state of Odisha. Since last three decades the migration has been experienced and it has been emerged as a tough task of the government to face the challenges very boldly. Government is taking so many welfare measures to strengthen the economic conditions of the people of these areas. Several innovative measures like increasing agricultural productivity, improving literacy and education services, poverty eradication, removing regional disparities and social security measures are initiated by the government to bring a overall socio-economic changes in the KBK region.

MGNREGS programme has been launched in a full swing to create hundred days wage employment in KBK reasons. But this programme is not satisfactory and unaccepted to the people due to some technical region of its implementation part. Hence, more concerted and vigilant efforts are needed for its implementation part. Due to scarcity of rain water the farmers are unable to procure paddy and become jobless. The government should undertake immediate action with fullest extent of implementation for a proper land and water management policy in KBK region to provide relief to the farming communities. To strengthen the backbone of the dependent agriculturist of this region, various irrigation projects, infrastructural projects must be promoted in a priority basis to curb the issue of seasonal migration and distress migration in the KBK region of Odisha.

Hence, emphasis must be given for a proper land and water management policy in the KBK region to avoid drought like situation. Further, various irrigation projects, infrastructural projects must be promoted in an urgent need basis to deal with the issues of seasonal migration and distress migration in the region.

Migration has certain adverse effect on human being. This must be informed to the people by organizing various awareness camps in the remote areas. People must be sensitized and more emphasis should be given to the programme like, public distribution system, cold storage

facilities, Labour Laws, Food Security Act., Migrant's Work Force Act., and Labourer's Welfare Schemes to bring a permanent solution to this migration issue.

Human migration including seasonal and distress always give a painful picture. To check the inflow of migration from KBK district the planners, policy makers and the government and non-government agencies should work in a war footing way. Mere formulation of policies are not sufficient rather its implementation is highly necessary to reach the desired fruits to the stakeholders.

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