

WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS: A STUDY OF TWO BLOCKS OF GANJAM DISTRICT

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Abstract

Migration of Labour in search of employment and improved livelihood is a common issue today. Migration is both Internal and International. Internal Migration in search of employment, has an impact on the economic, social and political conditions of the region both at the sending and receiving ends. About two out of Ten Indians are internal migrants. The labour migration is mostly male dominated, and there is a significant increase in the female migrants with the spurring hypermarkets, showrooms and factories. Not only this female are also engaged in construction sites, domestic workers and other informal sectors. The migration can be permanent, semi permanent, seasonal or circular. The challenges faced by the women migrants includes their inability to cope up with the diversity of culture, language, access to identity documentation, social entitlements, social and political exclusion, housing and exploitation. Moreover they have low level of job satisfaction. This paper is an attempt to study the challenges faced by the women migrant Labourers of two blocks of Ganjam district. The study is confined to internal women Migrant Labourers and their issues.

Key Words: Informal Sector, Migration, Women Workers



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Introduction

The history of humanity and development of human society is underpinned by migration. Migration of people across administrative/political jurisdictions within a country, or across countries, has been a crucial factor in changes in society. To tackle human migration, countries focus on the immediate economic, humanitarian, social and political implications of this global issue. Migration is a term that encompasses a wide variety of movements and situations that involve people of all walks of life. More than even before, migration touches many countries and people in an era of deepening globalization. This phenomena is embedded in trade and cultural exchange and has offered opportunities for millions of people. Migration can results

in transfer of skills, knowledge and technology that have considerable positive impact on productivity and economic growth. Migration may have positive or negative impacts on the lives of the individuals concerned, depending on a considerable number of factors. It is estimated that 73 per cent of migrants are workers. According to ILO report approximately 244 million migrants around the world, representing 3.3 per cent of the global population. Women make up almost half of migrants. Migrant workers contribute to the economies of their host countries, and the remittance they send home to boost the economies of their countries of origin. Yet, migrant workers often benefit from inadequate social protection and are vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking.

Theoretical Perspective

Migration denotes any movements of groups of people from one locality to another and takes different forms. In this movements of people, women's location and spaces are defined by their positioning within the society and state. The process is not simple as it seems as migration itself is varied- ranging from permanent, semi-permanent and temporary. Where people move for a few months in a year, the migrants are also known as short duration migrants, seasonal migrants or circulatory migrants. It can also be termed as voluntary or forced, legal or illegal.

NSS defines migrants based on usual place of residence which in turn is defined as a place(village, town) where the person had stayed continuously for a period of six months or more in a place (village, town) other than the village/town where he or she was enumerated. As per this definition, 94,495 rural households and 25,590 urban households report themselves as having migrated. In rural areas alone, the total number of migrants comes to 88 lakh persons, 92 per cent of them are female migrants.

Economic, demographic and technological improvements have boosted the flow of migrants in globalizing world. The flow though varies across countries, but the determinants of migration are more or less the same. Facts and figures from UN DESA (2013) shows that there were around 232 million international migrants spread all over the world. Out of the total, 59 are in developed and 41% in the developing regions- half of this represents female migrant work force.

Neoclassical Economics and Push-Pull Theory

This paper is based on the Ravenstein's arguments of Migration. His work was based on five general propositions; the first one is the existing relationship between migration and distance. He differentiated between the short and long distance migrants, with male predominance in

long-distance migration and female predominance in short-distance migration movements. Second, Ravenstein identifies a process of stage migration. According to him, migrants will come first from nearby villages towards the center of attraction or urban areas, but as industry and commerce continue to grow, migrants will be attracted from very distant villages as well. Third, he notes rural-urban differences in the propensity to emigrate, whereby the urban population display a lesser propensity to emigrate than the rural populations. Fourth, developments in technology and modes of transportation, Ravenstein argues, lead to an increase in migration. Lastly, the rationale behind the migration process, Ravenstein claims, is an individual rational decision, based on calculations of costs and benefits of migration. I think Ravenstein's idea is more appropriate to my paper for the study of migrated women.

The principles and hypotheses of Ravenstein's study became the keystone for further research on migration, leading to what is known as the "push-pull" theory of migration.

Geographical Area and Population

Located in the south-eastern part of Odisha bordering Andhra Pradesh, Ganjam is the most populous district of the state. The district is broadly divided into two distinct parts i.e (a) coastal plains in the east (b) hill and table land in the west. As noted in the Ganjam District Gazetteer (2016), while the coastal plains are fertile and close to irrigation sources, the western hill and table land is rocky and has less irrigation facilities. The hills are a continuation of the great line of Eastern Ghats mountain range. Some of the hilly tracts along the western parts of the district are thickly forested. The plains lie between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal but are narrow because of the absence of big rivers. Since the hills are close to sea, the rivers flowing from hills are not very long and are subject to sudden floods, sometimes triggered by cyclonic events.

Overwhelmingly rural, 78 per cent of the district population was counted in rural areas in 2011. Such a figure is somewhat lower than the state average of rural areas accounting for 83.3 per cent of Odisha's population. The relatively higher share of urban population in Ganjam is partly explained by the district having the highest number of towns (18), in comparison to other districts of Odisha, although all but one of them are small towns having populations of less than 25,000. Agriculture forms the backbone of the District's economy, with more than 70 per cent of the population being dependent on it (Ganjam District Gazetteer, 2016). In 2011, Ganjam had population of 3,529,031 of which male and female were 1,779,218 and 1,749,813 respectively.

Socio Economic Conditions of the Region

The economy of the Ganjam district is supported by both industry and agriculture. The District is well known for its food grain production and its export. Agriculture forms the backbone of the District's economy, with more than 70 per cent of the population being dependent on it. The agriculture sector employs about 75 per cent of the total workforce of the Ganjam district. The forest of the District provide a wide range of raw materials contributing to its economic growth . Timber , bamboo, tamarind, mahua, resin, kendu leaves, siali leaves, sal leaves, neem and karanja seeds are the main forest products. The Ganjam District owes International repute for its cottage industries and handicrafts. The Bomkai and Berhampuri Pata sarees and Brass Fish of Bellaguntha are famous for their attractiveness and designs. Different categories of handicraft artisans engaged in the traditional craft are residing in the Ganjam district. The main crafts are appliqué, stone carving, wood carving, brass and bell metal, paper machine, betel nut, textile toys etc. The artisans of the above craft are being assisted individually and through cooperative societies.

The people of Ganjam earn their livelihood by working as farmers, labourers , other casual workers in the household industry etc. Out of the total population, 42.55 percent are workers and 57.45 are non- workers as per 2011 census. Out of the total workers, 59.98 per cent are main workers and 40.02 per cent are marginal workers. Female workers comprise of 20.27 percent of total main workers and 54.77 percent of total marginal workers. Women contribute substantially to household incomes and activities though in many cases, their contributions do not get fully counted. There is a shift of agricultural labour to non-farm sector encouraging mechanization of the farm sector and which in turn would improve productivity of land and agricultural labour.

Most of the educated youths of poor households are migrating to various cities of Gujarat, India for bread winning. It covers a major migrated population of Ganjam District and affects the district economy significantly.

Literacy Rate

The literacy rate of Ganjam is 71.09 per cent(2011 census). Male literacy is 80.99 percent while female literacy is 61.13 per cent. Between 2001 and 2011, the overall literacy increased by about 10 percent points to 71.09 percent, whereas female literacy increased at a higher rate, of around 15 percent points to reach 61.13 percent. Village Education Committees have been formed to monitor education standards in primary schools.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- 1) Understand the socio-economic profile.
- 2) Understanding the factors which pushed women for migration.
- 3) To explore the economic discrimination at working place in the form of wage.

Sampling

A purposive sampling technique will be undertaken for selection of respondents. This sampling method undertaken that it will be more reliable as the study area is concerned and accurate information can be easily obtained and also the respondent will be relevant for representation. The sampling size is 100 which covers women of Soroda and Bhanjanagar blocks of Ganjam district migrating within and outside of Odisha.

Tools of data collection

There are several tools available for collecting the data in social science. But it always painstaking for a researcher to select any tools for his/her data collection. In the present study the researcher employed interview schedule and group discussion as the tools for data collection.

Sources of data collection

Both primary and secondary sources of data are employed for this research. The primary data are collected from the respondents of the two blocks of Ganjam district. The secondary data collects from books, journal, article, guides, magazine, news paper, and statistical report, published and unpublished document and mostly from internet sources.

Methodology

The article is based on study which has both quantitative and qualitative methods of investigation of secondary and primary sources which consists of a desk review of schemes, program and laws related to migration and the status of women in Ganjam from a women's perspective.

Result and discussion

In this part, the focus of the paper is on the socio-economic conditions of migrated women in Ganjam District. We have taken some indicators to explain their socio-economic conditions of migrated women are age, education, caste, religion, working hour etc.

Table-1 reveals that most of the migrated women start working at an early age. Maximum no of sample (50%), are in the age group of 36 to 46 years as shown in the table. While a

substantive number are between the age group of 25 to 35 years. Some are below the age group of 14 to 24 that is 12% of the total. 18% of interviewed women are between the age group of 47 to 60 years.

Table- 1 Age wise distribution of women workers

| Age Group | No. | Percentage |
|-----------|-----|------------|
| 14-24 | 12 | 12% |
| 25-35 | 20 | 20% |
| 36-46 | 50 | 50% |
| 47-60 | 18 | 18% |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Table-2 shows that the majority of respondents interviewed were Hindus (71%) while christian population is the second largest population that is 25 % of the total sample. Mainly Gouda gotha, salima gochaa and some other areas of Soroda block is highly dominated by christian population. Total 4% of women are from Muslim community. Women from Muslim community mainly go for work within the state or inter district migration.

Table- 2 Religion wise distribution

| Religion | No | Percentage |
|-----------|-----|------------|
| Hindu | 71 | 71% |
| Christian | 25 | 25% |
| Muslim | 04 | 04% |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

The total sample consisted of the following caste groups; Scheduled Caste (42%), Scheduled Tribes (23%), Other Backward Class (24%), General Category (07%) and 4% from Muslim community as shown in the Table No.3.

Table-3 Caste Distribution

| Caste | No | Percentage |
|---------|-----|------------|
| General | 07 | 07% |
| OBC | 24 | 24% |
| SC | 42 | 55% |
| ST | 23 | 10% |
| Others | 04 | 04% |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Table-4 indicates that most of the migrated workers have received no formal education. The shifting nature of work and residence is the major reason for the lack of access to education,

in addition to the lack of documentation like residency proof. As shown in Table 4, out of the total sample 62 per cent are illiterate, 17 per cent have passed primary, 7 per cent had completed higher secondary. Many of them are not aware of their children’s education. Due to the lack of resources, or no drive to study or to start work at early age due to economic compulsion, usually these workers are deprived of formal education. This low level of education can be indicative of low awareness level for these workers.

Table-4 Educational Qualification

| Education | No | Percentage |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Illiterate | 67 | 67% |
| Literate | 17 | 17% |
| Primary | 07 | 07% |
| Secondary | 05 | 05% |
| Higher Secondary | 04 | 04% |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

As shown in the **Table-5** almost all the provisions guaranteed by the Act, are violated by most of the owners. Workers themselves are unaware of the provisions by the Act. Workers who are aware of the provisions do not report the violations due to threat. Table No 5 shows the maximum no of women (40%) work for 9-10 hours. Thirty three per cent of the women work for 10-11 hours. The majority of the workers reported that due to the nature of the work they take longer time to finish the work, as it is time bound. The hours of work are determined by informal calculations depending on when the given task finishes, or ultimately at the discretion of the jobber.

Table-5 Working Hour

| Time | No | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|-------------------|
| 8-9 | 27 | 27% |
| 9-10 | 40 | 40% |
| 10-11 | 33 | 33% |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Women migrant workers face a number of barriers to social protection and decent work. Many exclusionary policies are still there which limit access to gender- responsive services, health care, legal support, lack of access to information on rights and protection, as well as sector

specific risks and language barriers. Discrimination of women in the workplace takes numerous forms ranging from the absence of maternity leave to sexual harassment. Discrimination of wages is often regarded as natural because the acute lack of female leadership has made the informal sector a non-aspirational one for women. About 70 women agreed that they were getting less amount of wage as compared to men workers. Workplace harassment both mental and sexual present a significant barrier to women accessing and progressing through the labour market. A maximum of 89 per cent women have witnessed the absence of maternity leave. They just know they get paid for their work. About 65 per cent women accepted that there was no security at the working place. They have to live with fear. Even on the days of leave they don't get the payment or any other help. There is also the issue of lack of Hygiene conditions of work.

Table -6 Women and working conditions

| Problems | No | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Discrimination | 70 | 70% |
| Mental Harassment | 30 | 30% |
| Sexual Harassment | 47 | 47% |
| Lack of Maternity benefits | 89 | 89% |
| No safety at workforce | 65 | 65% |
| Issue of Hygiene | 45 | 45% |

Table-7 shows the level of consciousness of women workers about labour laws or rights. During my Interview one lady told that because of many difficulties I have no future plan to go outside. “This is what people call us, a labourer. I do not know anything else. In addition, I don't have any knowledge about labour rights. You work so that you can eat. How would we come to know about all these?” 61 per cent of women interviewed do not have any knowledge about labor law or labor Rights. Only 39 per cent women know about Labor Rights. But they said that they lack the source of information about it. They come to this work through contractors and they don't have any bargaining rights with him.

Another woman named Anupama replied that:

“We get paid for our work just because we are daily labourers. What does labour rights mean then? We do not have any other rights apart from getting paid for the work we do. No pregnant woman was working in the field where I used to work. There was no question of leave. No work no pay. We do have provision for taking leaves. I don't know whether one should get

maternity leave and have never heard of such.” The picture shows that still most of the women labourers do not know about their rights. Still a miles to go.

Table-7 Awareness about Labor Laws and Rights

| Knowledge about Labor Laws | No | Percentage |
|----------------------------|----|------------|
| YES | 39 | 30% |
| No | 61 | 61% |

Governance Response:

There are several conventions at the international level that seek to respond to the situation of migrant workers, improve their labour rights, provide greater protection, and prevent exploitation and abuse:

- The UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families (ICRMW) is a key instrument for the protection of migrants’ rights;
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its General Recommendation No. 26 seek to strengthen protections for women migrant workers in all situations;
- ILO Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 and its supplementing Recommendation No. 201, seeks to extend basic labour rights to all domestic workers including migrants.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a number of goals, targets and indicators that address the situation of women migrant workers through different lenses, in particular Goal 4 on education, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 8 on decent work, Goal 10 on reducing inequality, and Goal 17 on global partnerships. Goal 5.4 specifically aims to, “Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work...”, which could have a direct bearing on the contribution migrant women make through the global care chain.³³ Goal 8.8 addresses women migrant workers directly through its commitment to “protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment”.

The contribution of women migrant workers to the social and economic development of countries of origin and destination was also firmly recognized at the 2013 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which recognized that women and girls account for almost half of all international migrants at the global level, and the need to address the special situation and vulnerability of migrant women and girls by, inter alia, incorporating a

gender perspective into policies and strengthening national laws, institutions and programmes to combat gender based violence, including trafficking in persons and discrimination against them.

The New York Declaration also recognize the significant contributions and leadership of women, committing to ensuring women's full and meaningful participation in the development of local solutions. Annex Two of the New York Declaration sets out the commitment to launch a process of intergovernmental negotiations that will lead to the adoption of a new "global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration" (global compact for migration). It is intended that the new global compact for migration will stipulate a range of principles, commitments and understandings among UN Member States regarding international migration in all its dimensions, enhancing international coordination and cooperation on migrants and human mobility. The content of the global compact on migration will address the, "protection of labour rights and a safe environment for migrant workers and those in precarious employment; protection of women migrant workers in all sectors; promotion of labour mobility, including circular migration".

Policy Recommendations:

Promote the development of human rights based and gender-responsive migration policies that address the gendered dimensions of migration, recognizing women's agency in migration and promoting women's empowerment and equality;

- ⑩ Increase collection and analysis of sex dis-aggregated data on remittances;
- ⑩ Improve data collection on wider socioeconomic aspects of women's migration, both in relation to the situation of those who migrate and the implications and impacts for those who remain in countries of origin, including the impacts of exploitation, abuse, and discrimination against migrants.
- ⑩ Improve training and capacity development on gender, migration, and development for policy makers;
- ⑩ Consult women migrants in policy making;
- ⑩ Increase civil society use of international mechanisms to advocate for greater government accountability to migrant women;
- ⑩ Counter the challenges faced by women in accessing formal remittance transfer systems regardless of informal employment status and increase measures to help promote financial literacy;

- ⑩ Recognize the positive contribution of women migrants to sustainable and inclusive development, and acknowledge that development cannot be truly sustainable and inclusive until it encompasses and fosters the full economic, social and political empowerment and the leadership of women and girls at all stages of migration.
- ⑩ Improve training and capacity development on gender, migration, and development for policy makers;
- ⑩ Consult women migrants in policy making.
- ⑩ Increase civil society use of international mechanisms to advocate for greater government accountability to migrant women;
- ⑩ Counter the challenges faced by women in accessing formal remittance transfer systems regardless of informal employment status and increase measures to help promote financial literacy;
- ⑩ Recognize the positive contribution of women migrants to sustainable and inclusive development, and acknowledge that development cannot be truly sustainable and inclusive until it encompasses and fosters the full economic, social and political empowerment and the leadership of women and girls at all stages of migration.

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be stated that there are so many factors responsible for women migration of Ganjam district, but one of the most important one is illiteracy, which in turn leads to low bargaining in workplace. Most of men of these villages do not work and are not engaged in any work. Therefore, their female partner had to go outside for earning. Caste is one of the another important factors which prohibits women to get engaged in local areas. A large number of women interviewed are belonging to SCs. Therefore, it becomes one of the reason they prefer to travel outside where no one asks them about their caste. They feel they are getting better wage as migrated workers than local areas. Some women preferred that they choose migration through their friends and relatives. Most of the women migrated are working in the construction sites.

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