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LIVELIHOOD PATTERNS OF MIGRATED TRIBAL PEOPLE FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREAS IN TRIPURA- A CASE STUDY OF AGARTALA



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ABSTRACT

The present study seeks to examine the interrelationship between rural to urban migration of the tribal peoples their livelihood patterns for their existence, on the basis of primary data collected from the migrated tribal peoples whom are residing at Agartala, the capital of Tripura and mostly urbanized area among the other areas in Tripura. The central argument of this paper is to find out the present and early livelihood patterns of the migrated tribal peoples and the reasons behind that. The vulnerable condition of the livelihood patterns in the rural areas forced them to migrate in the urban areas. Now, they are in such a condition that they can feed their stomach and family too and also meet the demands of their family members. They can provide a better and decent standard of living to their families which were previously not possible for them to give. So, therefore, the present study reveals that, the migration of tribal peoples from rural to urban areas gave them a new light to provide better and fruitful future for their families specifically for their children.

KEYWORDS: Rural-Urban, Migration, Tribal, Livelihood, Standard of Living.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant demographic phenomena facing many developing countries is the shortage of agricultural labour and food insecurity, and conversely, the acceleration of population growth in urban areas, which is largely triggered by the incidence of rural-urban migration (Agesa, 2001). The dominant narratives in most policy and some academic circles tend to be based not only on the assumption that migration is at an all-time high, but also that migration is a threat to social cohesion, economic growth and even security. In particular South-North migration tends to be seen as a problematic phenomenon caused by a poverty and a general lack of development (which, it is believed, makes people move) in the countries and regions of origin and as a potential threat to development in both the sending (e.g., the 'brain drain') and receiving societies (Golini, 1996:338). Urban life represents new employment opportunities, the possibility of working indoors, modernity, and being less tied to family duties, which is different from the traditional rural life of mainly working on farms, coupled with enormous family responsibilities (Kasanga et al., 1988). The first is an inversion of the composition of population as a result of migration of Bengali-speaking settlers from Bangladesh. Immigration of Bengali-speaking settlers has been an important feature of twentieth-century Tripura. Migration and resettlement were important consequences of Princely rule in the State. Tripura is the only State in the North East whose population has been transformed from being predominantly tribal to being predominantly non-tribal in the post- Independence period (Tripura Human Development Report, 2007). Migration decisions are, therefore, made within a context of socially recognized and mutually reinforcing

expectations that reflect several dimensions of gender relations between individuals, within households and in societal institutions (Francis 2000). Migrants tend to be seen as rational economic agents, able to judge differences in opportunities and rewards at home and the place of destination. Recent economic theories have emphasized the role of households, and migration strategies as elements of collective portfolios of activities and income sources (Haan, 2000). According to Scoones (1998), a household located in a particular context and economy may choose between (or be constrained from choosing) three main clusters of livelihood options - agricultural intensification and extensification, income diversification, and migration. In turn, De Haan and Rogaly (2002), in an important collection on labour mobility and rural society, argue that migration is much more common as a livelihood strategy than is often suggested, including for the poor. This echoes the conclusion of Ellis (1998: 55) that 'migration is one of the most important methods of diversifying rural livelihoods', although as Kothari (2002) notes; it may not be an option for the poorest (Waddington, Clare, 2003). As a result the impact of migration on rural households tends to be systemic; with far-reaching implications for the economic livelihood and daily lives of rural women. Murray (1981) contends that one important consequence of rural-urban migration on the household is that women are filling the roles of absent males, both within the household and in the community. Better management of households is likely to be associated with better well being of members (Whitehead, 2002).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON MIGRATION AND LIVELIHOOD PATTERNS

Migration particularly, rural to urban migration which tends to be most relevant for

the poor peoples. Migration tends to be seen as problematic, in academic and policy debates, and in the popular press. It is often seen as the consequence of ruptures, of environmental disaster, economic exploitation, or political or civil tensions and violence. And it is often perceived to be a cause of problems, like environmental degradation, health problems, 'brain drain', political or social instability, declining law and order, and unraveling social fabric and support systems (Haan, 2000). Migration contributes to the livelihoods of the poor. A livelihood is considered to consist of the assets, activities and entitlements that enable people to make a living (Singh et al 1994, cited in Mugisha, 2005:27). It is assumed that the extreme poor people are more likely to migrate to other parts of the country (Siddiqui, Tasneem, 2003). During the 1960s and 1970s much migration to Western Europe from former colonial countries was dominated by men, and so is migration to construction and other jobs in the Gulf States. International migration streams are similarly diverse (Floro and Schaefer, 1998). The number of women among the international migrants is hardly less than the number of men: in 1990 world-wide an estimated 57 million women were 'foreign-born', forming 48 per cent of the total 'stock' of migrants (UN, World Population Monitoring, 1997). Empirical studies show that migration reduces the uncertainty of a family income, provides investment funds, and livelihoods for those with small plots (Knowles, and Anker, 1981). Migration helps to reduce poverty, even though in many cases it does not radically improve living conditions. But as accesses to opportunities are not randomly distributed, it may also contribute to increasing inequality. In the case of Indian rural to urban migration, it has been emphasized that better-off migrants are 'pulled' towards better job prospects, while the poor are 'pushed': "push' and 'pull'

migration are twin children of inequality in the same sort of village; but they are also sources of new inequality" (Lipton, M., 1980). The migration itself is a source of vulnerability because of a lack of effective regulation of employment conditions, because of having to set out without any guarantee of a job, and because of migrants' lack of powerful allies, or indeed networks of any kind, in the temporary destination area. Yet, paradoxically, the earnings from migration can be the only means available to poor households of creating greater control over their lives, including the power to choose not to have one or more members migrating (Rafique, Massey and Rogaly, Ben, 2006). Migrants tend to invest in education and other community activities, and help to build or teach in schools, through remittances or after their return. Like the material returns from migration, these educational gains may also increase differentiation and inequality. Education is a very common motive for migration, but many labour migrants come back with some newly acquired skills as well (Francis and Hoddinott, 1993). Also environmental change has traditionally resulted in regular displacements of large numbers of people; for example, river erosion, particularly along the channels and tributaries of the Brahmaputra in Assam and Bangladesh (McDowell and Haan, De, 2000). The large scale immigration has not only placed a tremendous burden on resources of the State, but also upheaval in the social composition of its population. Tripura was a Tribal-majority State before partition; today Tribal people constitute only 31 percent of the total population (Economic Review of Tripura, 2010-11).

AREA, PEOPLE AND METHODS

The present study was carried out among the migrated tribal peoples those who were migrated from remote rural areas to urban areas at Agartala, the capital of Tripura.

Agartala situated in Sadar sub-division of West Tripura district. Agartala is located at 23°30'0" N latitude and 91°30'0" E longitude. The total geographical area of Agartala is 58.84 km². Agartala is mostly advanced and urbanized area among the state. Agartala has grown along the banks of river Haora and historically settled by the Bengali peoples those who were migrated from East Pakistan at the time of independence and from Bangladesh in 1971 riot. But, with the passes of time, tribal peoples are also came and settled here in large number. The present paper deals with the reasons that why tribal peoples were coming from far remote areas to this place. To know, why they came? In total of 80 individuals has interviewed to gather their views and opinions (data) which will help the study to reach its goal through 'structured interview schedule' method for gathering their valuable outlooks on the basis of 'purposive sampling'. The main argument of this paper is to stress firstly, the early livelihood patterns of migrated tribal peoples who were migrated from remote rural areas to urban areas and secondly, to know their present livelihood patterns and thirdly, the reasons for their migration, which are the objectives of this present study.

EARLY LIVELIHOOD PATTERNS OF MIGRATED TRIBAL PEOPLES

Migrants tend to be seen as rational economic agents, able to judge differences in opportunities and rewards at home and the place of destination. Recent economic theories have emphasized the role of households, and migration strategies as elements of collective portfolios of activities and income sources (Haan, de, 2000). The tribals those who were migrated from remote rural to urban areas and settled here, were categorized into seasonal, permanent and short distance migration.

Among the tribal migrants, 61.25% were seasonal migrants who came in a particular season; 26.25% were permanent migrants whosettled permanently in the urban areas in group or individually on rented houses and remaining 12.5% were grouped under daily short-distance migrants who travelled daily from their house to the work place (urban areas). The tribal peoples were migrated from their native place (rural areas) to urban areas; individually their livelihood patterns were different from each other. Among the interviewed individuals, 22.50% of tribal peoples were doing jhum cultivation (also known as shifting cultivation); 15% tribal peoples were doing settled agricultural practices; 10% of them were carpenter, 7.50% of them were traditional workers who made the tribal based traditional goods like ria (a piece of cloth), bamboo based products, household's goods etc.; 7.5% of them were forest dwellers who dependent on forest based products as a livelihood and their existence; 15% tribal peoples were fisherman and fishing was the only livelihood pattern for them for survival; 10% of them were petty businessman who had a small sized shop on the roadside; 8.75% tribal peoples were daily household laborers who used to do households works like fencing, clearing jungles at home, build kaccha houses (house of bamboo, soil) etc. and remaining 3.75% tribals were driver who drove the vehicles in the rural areas and survived with the earned money. Therefore, it is clear from the aforesaid data and discussion that the livelihood patterns of the migrated tribal peoples were diverse and different from each other and they were came in this urban area (Agartala) from different and remote rural areas (remote villages).

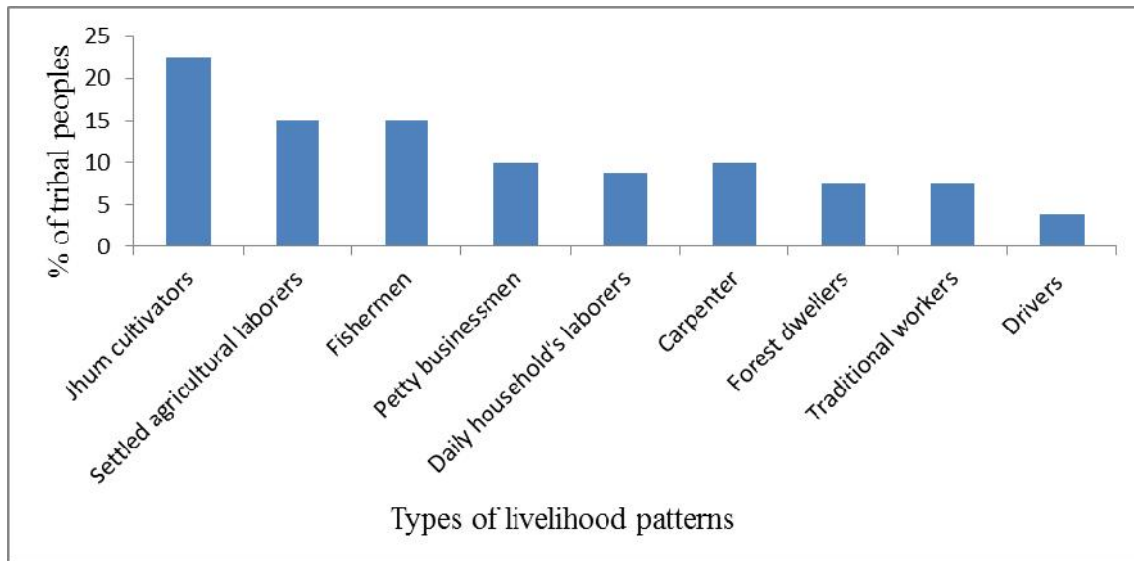


Fig.1: Early livelihood patterns of migrated tribal peoples, Source: Primary data

REASONS FOR MIGRATION OF THE TRIBAL PEOPLES

Tribals living in the rural areas have likewise been pushed to move to the urban areas for getting better and decent standard of living and a secure life. The tribals were migrated from their native place to urban areas as their living condition was very poor and live in extreme poverty as their choices were limited and getting fewer facilities in comparison with urban areas. Inequitable distribution of income due to different livelihood patterns but the cost of goods and other things were same in the market. Unemployment, is an another important issue for the tribals as the population is growing dynamically and the resources (like soil, water, natural vegetation) are depleting, so tribals are facing lack of means of work. Difficult livelihood patterns and food insecurity, is an additional significant reason for the migration of tribal peoples from the remote rural areas to urban areas as they are not getting sufficient amount of output crops as they wanted to get from their agricultural fields and of course, it is very difficult to produce crops from the agricultural fields without using any pesticides and modern tools, which are costly and couldn't afforded by the poor tribal

peoples. Tribals were also migrated due to climate change as some of the tribals were dependent forest products but due to the depletion of forest, they didn't have any other choices except leave their native place and migrated to some other places. The tribals were also migrated for their children and future generation too, for their children who will get better future and decent standard of living like schooling, medical facilities. Tribals were also migrated to earn more and more money to clear their debts which they took when they were in rural areas. Tribals are using their physical strength to earn more money in their off-seasons time or when they didn't have any kind of work to do in their native places. The tribals those who were forest dwellers and fully dependent on forest based products for their livelihood and existence, now a days, they also migrated to urban places for earning more money before knock the old age and try to secure their future life as they don't want to rely upon one's shoulder at their old age. Thus, it is clear from the above said reasons that tribal peoples were migrated from their native place to urban areas for their better standard of living and more specifically for their low economic condition.

PRESENT LIVELIHOOD PATTERS OF THE MIGRATED TRIBAL PEOPLES

Migration interfaces various positive dimensions of people’s livelihoods. In the case of Nepal, rural-urban migration is important for improving people’s livelihoods. Poor and landless people migrate to urban centers for subsistence livelihoods, and some better-off people migrate to gain and take monetary advantages in the cities. All the migrants do this for the betterment of life as compared to their origin. Rural-urban migration can be understood as improving livelihoods in terms of building capital assets. Income diversification and enhancement should enable migrants and their families at the origin to better cope with shocks and uncertainty. It is more related to livelihoods sustainability than improving (Timalsina, Prasad, Krishna, 2007). Among the interviewed tribal peoples, 52.50% of tribal people were ‘daily laborers’ and their income/day is Rs. 280-350, according to their ability and efficiency. These laborers were actually the seasonal migrants who came in a particular season to do such works when there is no work in their native place; 28.75% of tribal

peoples were ‘rickshaw drivers’ as they don’t have that much of skill and efficiency, therefore, they have chosen this kind of livelihood pattern and if a ‘rickshaw pullers’ drives sincerely and regularly, they may earn Rs. 400-450 /day; 12.50% of tribal peoples were engaged as a ‘petty businessman’ as they were also ‘petty businessman’ in their own native place and they may earn Rs. 200-250 /day as they know how to handle this kind of businessman and remaining, 6.25% of tribal peoples were drivers of vehicles as they know how to drive and in the past time, they also did the same kind of work in their native place and everyday here, they may earn Rs. 300-350. Therefore, the data reveals that the livelihood patterns of migrated tribal peoples are few in types in urban areas though they all came from different areas and earlier their livelihood patterns were also different but after coming to the urban areas, they didn’t have so many options to do same work as they did in rural areas. Therefore, they were compelled to do the first available works as they wanted to get good and sufficient income and wages.

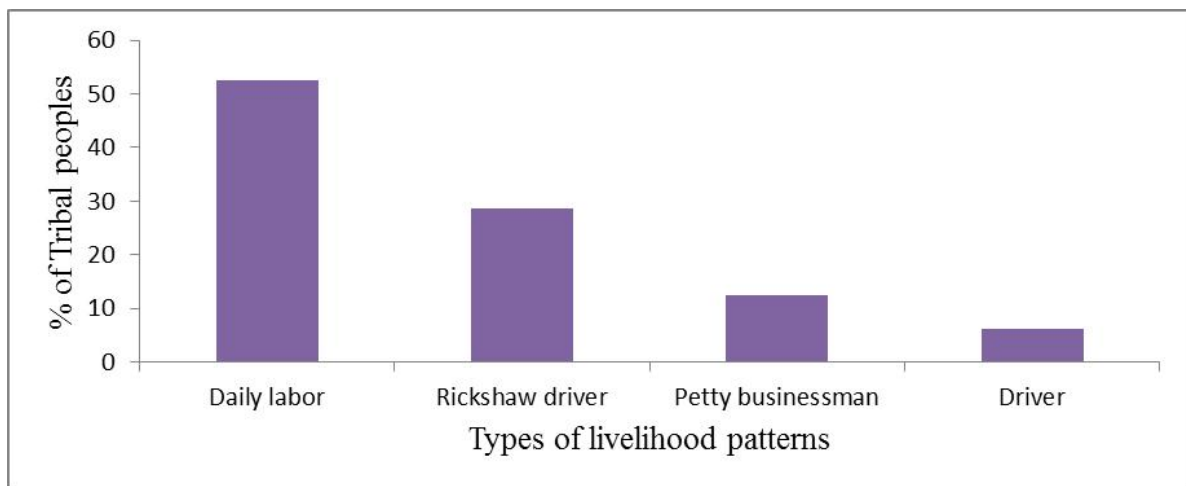


Fig.2: Present livelihood patterns of migrated tribal peoples, Source: Primary data

CONCLUSION

The paper has attempted to shed some light on the migration of tribal peoples from rural areas to urban areas in search of better livelihood patterns according to their ability and efficiency. In the early times (before migration from their native place), everyone were doing different kind of works as a livelihood but the income they earned and wages, they were getting was not sufficient and up to the mark to feed their stomach and their family too. So, they had decided to migrate from their native place to urban areas. The migrated from their native place to urban areas due to poor living condition, low level of income and low wages, unemployment in the of-season, food insecurity and to provide a better future for their children. Presently they are working in the urban areas and are getting better income and wages in comparison to their native place (rural areas). Now, they are in such a condition that they can feed their stomach and family too and also meet the demands of their family members too. They can provide a better and decent standard of living to their families which were previously not possible for them to give. So, therefore, the present study reveals that, the migration of tribal peoples from rural to urban areas gave them a new light to provide better and fruitful future for their families specifically for their children.

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