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Short-Term Migration and Impact on Livelihood: Plights of Tribal Women Migrants in Korba, Chhattisgarh

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ABSTRACT

This contextual analysis explores the multifaceted dimensions of migration, with a specific focus on short-term migration among women in Korba, Chhattisgarh. Employing a qualitative research approach, this study investigates the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors influencing women's migration patterns in the region. Through in-depth interviews, surveys, and participant observations, we aim to unravel the nuanced reasons behind short-term migration, shedding light on the impact of such mobility on women's lives, families, and the community at large. The findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of migration dynamics, enabling policymakers, researchers, and local stakeholders to formulate targeted interventions that address the unique challenges faced by migrating women in Korba.

KEY WORDS

Migration, Short-term migration, Cultural Influences, Tribal Women, Socio-economic Factors, Environmental Determinants.

INTRODUCTION

"Migration is a complex phenomenon influenced by social, economic, political, geographical, and environmental factors. Migration has been an important element of human history, where people have been moving from one place to another in search of livelihood". The impact of migration on household agricultural production is seen in the net effect of the loss of family labor and the positive impact of receiving remittances. Policies should focus on promoting initiatives that reduce the constraints that provoke out-migration in rural and tribal areas and support investments of migrants in their places of origin" (J. FITZGERALD, 2014).

Migration is part and parcel of the history of humankind and accompanies the evolution of societies. Human mobility has always been part of the process of economic, social, and human development. "As societies transform, people inevitably move within and between countries in search of better opportunities. Migration is recognized in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as one of the means to reduce inequality within and among countries. The last century has witnessed dramatic changes in international migration flows. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Europe was a major source of migration, with people moving¹. "Today, international migration is the subject of great concern and attention. Between 1990 and 2015, the number of international migrants increased from 153 million to 248 million. As many as 25 million of these are refugees who left their countries because of conflicts and crises. In light of this, high-income destination countries increasingly perceive international migration as a major challenge. However, to put things into perspective it should be noted that as a share of the world population, the increase in international migration between 1990 and 2015 was only from 2.9 percent to 3.3 percent"².

Migration

Migration is a significant factor in economic development and human resources planning. It has acquired a special significance in the context of the commercialization of agriculture. The lack of industrial development in rural areas, poor infrastructure, low agricultural productivity, and limited job opportunities induce the rural population to migrate to other areas that offer better employment opportunities and wages (Kumar, 2005). "According to Classical Theory, migration is a rational decision made by an individual to move from a less advantageous situation to a more advantageous one after weighing risks and benefits. Human migration is the permanent or semi-permanent relocation of people from one location to another. This movement may occur domestically or internationally and can affect economic structures, population densities, culture, and politics".

The main driving force of internal migration in India is employment and marriage which has led to shaping the economic, social, and political life of India's sending and receiving regions. "Internal migrants vary widely in degrees of education, income levels, and skills. Also, variations exist in profiles in terms of caste, religion, age, and other categories. Most of the labor migrants are employed in key sub-sectors, like construction, domestic work, textile and brick manufacturing, transportation, mining agriculture, etc.

Types of Migration

People either are made to move involuntarily (i.e. forced), are put in situations that encourage relocation (i.e. reluctant), or choose to migrate (i.e. voluntarily):

- a. **Voluntary migration:** Voluntary migration is migration based on one's free will and initiative. People move for a variety of reasons, and it involves weighing options and choices.
- b. **Reluctant migration:** "Reluctant migration is a form of migration in which individuals are not forced to move, but do so because of an unfavorable situation at their current location.
- c. **Forced migration:** "Forced migration is a negative form of migration, often the result of persecution, development, or exploitation.
- d. **In-Migration & Out-Migration:** In-migration refers to moving into a particular area while out-migration is moving out of a specific area. For example, migrants coming from the Rural Area of Chhattisgarh to the Urban Area of Chhattisgarh are 'in migrants' for the Urban Area of Chhattisgarh and 'out migrants' for the Rural Area of Chhattisgarh. While livelihood strategies are varied and multiple, for many poor people, migration represents a central component. Thus, understanding migration as primarily an economic survival strategy for those immediately involved does allow for a detailed analysis of migration and the chronically poor.

However, Migration can be classified in more ways based on Situation and Characteristics which are as follows; When it is considered the Place of Origin and Destination of Migrants then it has various classifications.

- e. **Internal Migration:** People moving about inside the borders of a nation or state. A shift of residence within a state, region, city, or municipality is referred to as internal migration. Internal migration is additionally classified into four types:
- **Rural to Urban Migration (R-U):** The movement of population from rural areas to the nearby towns and cities mainly in search of better livelihood and standard of living, i.e., employment, education, and recreation facilities.
 - **Rural to Rural Migration (R-R):** Mostly agricultural workers, because of marriages, and sometimes looking for land for cultivation.
 - **Urban to Urban Migration (U-U):** The relocation from one metropolitan community to the next looking for more significant compensation and another market for business potential opens doors.
 - **Urban to Rural Migration (U-R):** The movement from urban areas or cities to rural areas to get freed of urban problems like air pollution, overcrowding, and noise pollution, and return to their native place after retirement from jobs.

One more factor to classify migration is time which means how long migrants have stayed in their destination from origin hence it is divided into the following:

- **Short-term Migration:** The migrants stay outside just for a brief length before getting back to their place.
- **Long-term Migration:** The migrants stay outside, essentially, for a couple of years. Examples: Companies send their employees for projects and students for education.
- **Seasonal Migration:** Usually, a group of people moves from their local spots during a specific season and returns after the finish of that season. Agriculture-based labor is an example of seasonal migration.

Causes of Migration

Fundamental to the understanding of rural-urban migration flow is the push and pull factors developed by LEE in 1966. "Some circumstances make people leave home for other areas and these are agricultural productivity, unemployment, etc. There are also, other conditions that attract rural migrants to the urban areas and these are known conditions, better income opportunities, etc"³.

There is no doubt that, apart from these factors, urban areas also offer a chance to enjoy a better lifestyle. The provision of services such as electricity, pipe-borne water, and public services makes urban areas attractive. While the motives for tribal movement are important in themselves, the means of movement are also of importance. Improvements in transport systems and increasing awareness of the urban areas through media, and social networks, together with improved educational standards are equally important factors to be taken into account when dealing with rural-urban migration as a phenomenon. Rural inhabitants see and hear success stories about people who leave their communities for the cities. This acts as an incentive for more out-migration from rural areas.

The root causes of Tribal Migration

Migration is often a deliberate decision and an important component of household livelihood strategies. The root causes of people deciding to move out of their areas are as follows:

- **Poverty and Food Insecurity:** Poor and food-insecure live in tribal areas, mostly depending on agricultural production for their subsistence. The tribal poor, and especially smallholder family farmers, face considerable difficulties in accessing credit, services, technologies, and markets that would allow them to improve the productivity of their natural resources and labor. Migration becomes an important part of the strategies of tribal households for improving their livelihoods.
- **Lack of Employment and Income-generating Opportunities at Origin:** Most available jobs in agriculture are associated with low and unstable incomes, poor safety and health conditions, gender

inequality in pay and opportunities, and limited social protection. Due to restricted access to training, financial and extension services, and processing facilities, more attractive prospects may be limited among tribes.

- **Inequality:** “Tribal people are drawn to urban areas where they expect to have better employment opportunities and improved access to health, education, and basic services Limited access to social protection. About out of the total ST population, 11 percent of the population has no adequate access to social protection. The majority live in the rural areas of developing countries, where they face difficulties in managing social, economic, and environmental risks”⁴.
- **Climate Change:** Smallholder family farmers, small-scale fishers, forest-dependent communities, and pastoralists are hardest hit by weather-related disasters, which are increasing in frequency and intensity. “Droughts and related food price volatility increase poverty and hunger, and the need to find viable options elsewhere Depletion of natural resources due to environmental degradation and climate change: Land degradation and desertification affect around one-third of the land used for agriculture and about 1.5 billion people worldwide, undermining inappropriate farming techniques further exacerbate these challenges. The dramatic state of land degradation is one of the main drivers of conflict in the African drylands, especially between pastoralists and farmers”⁵.

The Inception of the Paper

Chhattisgarh, a state located in central India, is known for its rich tribal heritage and abundant natural resources. Among the various districts in Chhattisgarh, Korba stands out as an important industrial region due to its vast reserves of coal and other minerals. The district has witnessed significant economic development over the years, fuelled by industrialization and mining activities. However, this progress has also led to several social and economic challenges, particularly for marginalized communities, including tribal populations. “Tribal communities in Chhattisgarh, especially women, have faced multifaceted issues like poverty, lack of education, limited access to healthcare, and limited livelihood opportunities.

These challenges have often pushed them to explore alternative means of survival and sustenance, leading to internal and external migration. Internal migration refers to the movement of people within the same country, typically from rural to urban areas or from resource-depleted regions to areas with better opportunities”⁶. External migration, on the other hand, involves movement beyond national borders. The migrant tribal women of Korba, Chhattisgarh, have been a subject of interest for the researcher due to their unique experiences as short-term migrants. Hence study aims to delve into the reasons behind their migration, the challenges they encounter during the process, and the impact of migration on their livelihoods and overall well-being. Furthermore, it looks at the Livelihood Strategies adopted by migrant tribal women in their destination areas. “It involves exploring the types of work they engage in, whether it is informal labor, domestic work, or other economic activities. Additionally, try to analyze the socioeconomic impact of migration on the lives of these women and their families left behind. It also includes changes in income levels, access to education and healthcare, and overall household dynamics”⁷. Moreover, it investigates the role of social support systems, both within the community and at their destination, in facilitating or hindering the migration process and improving the well-being of migrant tribal women.

Afterward looks at the existing policy frameworks to address the challenges faced by migrant tribal women, enhance their livelihood opportunities, and promote social inclusivity. Therefore, this research study is an attempt to shed light on the intricate interplay between migration and livelihood among tribal women in Korba, Chhattisgarh. However, the study facilitates targeted and sustainable development initiatives that will help in the future to empower tribal women and help them lead more dignified and prosperous lives.

Scheduled Tribes in India

Historically, the “Indian society had stratified on the caste, class, and creed lines; which were later

termed in tribes and were initially developed based on the occupation” (Azam, 2013). This inequality is a critical component of human mobility, and it has massive potential for the growth of social development.

The “tribal group of the country, as per the 2011 census, is 10.43 crore, constituting 8.6% of the whole population. 89.97% of them live in rural regions and 10.03% in urban spaces. The decadal population extension of the tribal’s from Census 2001 to 2011 has been 23.66% against the 17.69% of the whole population”. 91.7 percent of these tribal people live in rural areas, mostly in and around forests. India is home to tribal people, i.e., 8.6 percent of India’s total population; there are about 700 State-specific tribes and 75 Primitive Tribe Groups (PTGs); “91.7 percent of these tribal people live in rural areas, mostly in and around forests”. Since the tribal communities reside in the remote interiors which are not readily accessible, therefore these people are underdeveloped.

“The best-known world novelist Albert Camu’s famous book “Outsider” illustrates the story of the pathetic alienation of the man who becomes an outsider of society. In the case of Chhattisgarh, the state has a significant share of the tribal population, and they often migrate under developmental projects. As a result, there is a devastating blow to social capital- which is the base of their survival and identity and ultimately leads to the disintegration of their rich culture”.

Scheduled Tribes in Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh, the 26th State of India, was carved out of Madhya Pradesh on November 1, 2000. It is surrounded by Uttar Pradesh on the north, Jharkhand on the northeast, Orissa on the east, Andhra Pradesh on the southeast and south, Maharashtra on the southwest, and Madhya Pradesh on the west and northwest.

“Chhattisgarh abounds in hilly regions and plains. The climate of Chhattisgarh is mainly tropical, humid and sub-humid. The climate is hot because of its position in the tropics of cancer and other ills. May is the hottest month of December and January is the coldest one. The State is entirely dependent on the monsoons for rains. The Mahanadi is the Main River and life of the State”⁸.

Chhattisgarh is a tribal excess state as the majority of the population is tribal. “The indigenous people are used to situate their villages near their food and water source; Bastar district of Chhattisgarh has the largest tribal population. The tribal people have their own choice regarding ornaments and women love to wear knick-knacks made of cowries, shells, bones, copper and bronze, and mixed metals”⁹.

Scheduled Tribes and Migration in India

As per the “Report of the Expert Committee on Tribal Health, ‘Tribal Health in India’ Bridging the Gap and a Roadmap for the Future”, “104 million tribal people in India are largely concentrated in ten states and the North-East. Most of India’s tribes reside in the highlands and plains of central and southern regions and the northeastern regions of India. The tribals of India have mostly lived in relative geographic isolation, in homogeneous groups with limited interactions with non-tribals. This has led them to develop their tribe-specific cultures, attires, and ways of living. Ideally, they should have been able to preserve their way of living without compromising on their economic development”¹⁰.

However, currently, both seem to be under threat. Development has failed to reach the tribals adequately and sustainably which is resulting in increasing migration of tribals to developed areas of India in search of opportunities and livelihood.

“As per Census, 2011 over two-thirds of the tribal population is working in the primary sector (as against 43% of the non-tribal population), and is heavily dependent on agriculture either as cultivators or as agricultural laborers. The tribal people are increasingly moving from being cultivators to agricultural laborers. A comparison between the Census, 2001 and 2011 shows that the proportion of cultivators reduced by more than 10%, while the proportion of agricultural laborers increased by 9% among the ST population. It is estimated that, in the last decade, about 3.5 million tribal people have left agriculture and agriculture-related

activities to enter the informal labor market”¹¹. Displacement and enforced migration have also led to an increasing number of Scheduled Tribes working as contract laborers in the construction industry and domestic workers in major cities.

Scheduled Tribes and Migration in Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh and tribal culture are two tautological terms since a third of the state’s populace is dominated by tribals. “The population of the STs in the state is 78.22 lakh (2011 Census) accounting for around 31% of the total population of the state and 94.7% of which is rural in nature. The literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes in the State is 52.10 % which is higher than the national average of 47.10 %. About 80-90% of households migrate in search of livelihood for 6-8 months in a year”¹².

“Migration from Chhattisgarh to Punjab, Kerala is noticeable in the construction and agriculture sector; Seasonal migration for the duration of six to eight has been reported. However, the Feminization of migration has happened in Chhattisgarh in the last 5 years, particularly in the domestic, textile, and agriculture sectors”¹³.

Therefore, in Chhattisgarh, it reaffirms that seasonal as well as long-term migration is a significant coping mechanism to escape chronic poverty due to access failure to production resources, population pressure and declined landholdings, recurring droughts, and access failure to land-based livelihood and lack of off-farm employment avenues and consumption loan from moneylender that result in a debt-trap. “A general lack of awareness about Government schemes related to benefits, skill development, and even social security schemes is available among migrants of Chhattisgarh. Additionally, the Trafficking of girls emerged as a critical issue in the contemporary situation. Organizations working on this issue were reported to have saved several girls during transit”¹⁴.

Migration and Short-Term Migration among Women in Korba, Chhattisgarh

Migration is defined as a permanent change in residence across specified administrative or political boundaries. Those who fulfill these criteria are considered migrants. The motivations for migration are driven by various factors such as wants, needs, aspirations, and the pursuit of a better livelihood. Geographical barriers or other challenging situations can hinder people’s ability to earn a living, leading to a state of imbalance in their lives. Consequently, individuals may move to new places voluntarily or forcibly in search of a more stable life and opportunities to improve their social class and escape oppression.

“Moreover, Migration is a type of movement in which, for several reasons, people relocate beyond clearly established administrative boundaries. These migratory flows may be seasonal, semi-seasonal, or permanent. Particularly seasonal or circular migrants experience the job market and integration difficulties very differently from immigrants who are here permanently. Internal migration is a typical occurrence in India, where the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) of India projected 326 million internal migrants (or 28.5% of the population) in 2007-2008”¹⁵.

In the context of India, tribal populations have been historically associated with patterns of migration, which often result from socioeconomic factors and the search for livelihood opportunities. Within the broader context of migration, the specific experiences of tribal women have garnered increasing attention in recent years. Tribal women, belonging to vulnerable groups, often face unique challenges and vulnerabilities when it comes to migration due to their intersecting identities of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. People who move away from their normal residence for three months or more but for less than a year are considered to be short-term migrants.

Short-term migration can have a significant impact on the livelihoods of rural households. It can bring in much-needed income and resources, but it can also lead to social and economic problems. In rural India, short-term migration is a typical means of survival. Although there are many other reasons people move, they frequently include: earning a larger income than is available in rural areas. To escape their poverty and misery

and provide better healthcare and education for their children. Short-term migration is commonly employed by Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe households, who are more likely to be destitute. While the key factor contributing to the unequal distribution of wealth among the social categories is distress. "Short-term Internal migration that occurs for a brief period can help people escape the persistence trap. Rural communities use short-term migration as a coping mechanism. According to estimates, 80% of migrants in India leave rural regions in search of better economic possibilities and stay away from the village for little more than six months"¹⁶

However, Chhattisgarh is a state located in central India and is known for its significant tribal population. Many of the tribes in Chhattisgarh have distinct cultures, languages, and traditions. Migration among tribal women in the region can be broadly categorized into two types: long-term migration and short-term or seasonal migration. Short-term or seasonal migration among tribal women in Chhattisgarh is quite common, and it is primarily driven by economic factors and the search for livelihood opportunities.

Reasons for Short-Migration

Seasonal Agriculture: In many tribal areas, agriculture is the primary source of livelihood. During specific seasons when agricultural activities are limited, such as between sowing and harvesting, there might be a lack of employment opportunities in the villages. To bridge this gap, some women may migrate temporarily to nearby towns or cities to find work.

- **Non-Farm Employment:** Apart from agriculture, other livelihood opportunities in rural areas might be limited. As a result, tribal women may travel to urban areas for temporary work in construction, domestic labor, or other informal sectors.
- **Livelihood Diversity:** Short migration can be a strategy for diversifying livelihood options and supplementing household income. It allows tribal women to earn additional money during certain periods and support their families back in the village.
- **Education and Aspirations:** With increasing awareness about education and better opportunities beyond traditional tribal occupations, some women may choose to migrate temporarily to earn money for their education or to pursue their aspirations.

Challenges

Short migration among tribal women, while serving as an economic coping mechanism, also presents some challenges. Hence, Short-term migration among tribal women, serving as an economic coping mechanism, undeniably provides a vital means for supplementing household incomes and addressing financial challenges within their communities. This practice allows these women to access employment opportunities in urban or industrial areas, contributing to their families' economic stability.

However, this migration strategy is not without its challenges. The temporary nature of employment often means job insecurity and a lack of social security measures, exposing these women to vulnerabilities. Additionally, adapting to unfamiliar urban or industrial environments requires significant social adjustments, posing cultural and psychological challenges. The transient nature of these migrations can disrupt family structures and community cohesion, impacting the overall well-being of tribal women.

As such, while short-term migration offers an economic lifeline, it is essential to acknowledge and address the accompanying difficulties to ensure a more holistic understanding of its impact on the lives of tribal women in the context of their livelihood strategies, but they have to face challenges are as follows;

- **Exploitation and Vulnerability:** Women working in informal sectors in urban areas might be exposed to exploitation, low wages, and unsafe working conditions.
- **Social Dislocation:** Short migration can disrupt traditional family structures and social ties, as women are away from their communities for extended periods.

- **Lack of Social Security:** Migrant workers often lack access to social security benefits and face difficulties in accessing healthcare and other Government schemes.
- **Urban-Rural Divide:** Disparities between urban and rural areas can widen as migration becomes a norm, leading to unequal development.

Overall, short migration among tribal women in Chhattisgarh reflects the complex interplay between traditional livelihoods, economic opportunities, and aspirations for a better life. Addressing the challenges and ensuring inclusive development can contribute to improving the well-being of these communities while preserving their unique cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the paper depicts migration patterns among tribal women in Korba, Chhattisgarh, and reveals a complex interplay of economic, social, and cultural factors shaping their livelihood strategies. The phenomenon of short-term migration emerges as a significant coping mechanism for tribal women to supplement household incomes, particularly during seasons of agricultural inactivity. The diverse reasons driving migration include economic hardships, seasonal agricultural patterns, and the pursuit of education and aspirations.

While short-term migration undoubtedly serves as an economic lifeline for these tribal women, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the associated challenges. The vulnerability of women to exploitation, the disruption of traditional family structures, and the lack of social security measures are pressing concerns. The transient nature of these migrations raises issues of job insecurity and exposes women to unfamiliar urban or industrial environments, necessitating significant social adjustments. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the disparities in development between urban and rural areas, potentially widening the urban-rural divide as migration becomes a norm. The impact of migration on family dynamics and community cohesion requires thoughtful consideration for inclusive development strategies.

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