

Migration in Darbha Block of Bastar District (Chhattisgarh): A Study

GAURAV KUMAR AGARWAL

"It is an explosive situation in India today as far as agriculture is concerned and the farmers are concerned, with the employment rates in rural areas being the lowest since the late 1990s. We keep hearing about huge displacements due to dam-building or canal-digging, but let me tell you the biggest displacement is in agriculture where the largest mass migration in the history is beginning to unfold, following displacement of people from their land..."

P. Sainath, 'India's Brave New World: The Agrarian Crisis, Farm Suicides and the Wages of Inequality,' hosted by the South Asian Journalists' Association in New York.

A large number of educated, uneducated and illiterate tribal women from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal migrate to different parts of the country. Metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata are their main destinations. They search for gainful employment as casual labour in the unorganized sector or as household maids for their livelihood. They are often exploited physically and sexually.

There is not enough data available to analyze and understand migration, particularly among women tribals, the regional and seasonal variations, the different types and forms of migration such as inter-state cross-migration, circular migration, occupational migration, short-term migration, long-term migration, migration caused by displacement and gender migration. The reasons for this exodus need to be studied in detail, especially because a large number of development programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY), the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), the Food For Work Programme (FFW), the Prime Minister Gramin Swarojgar Yojana (PMGSY) and the Swarna Jayanti Gramin Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) have all been introduced to address the issue of migration.

The proposed study plans to find the reasons for the migration of tribals and to document how and where they migrate to; their living conditions prior to migration and at their place of migration; what they think about their future; whether they

know of the development programmes being implemented for their benefit; their health status; their vertical job mobility; the impact of the migration on their socio-economic life pattern at the individual and the community levels; the agencies involved; and all the other related aspects.

The study will focus on the tribal majority state of Chhattisgarh and will include women migrants from the cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata. The findings of the study will be used to make suggestions to policy makers, to undertake various development and welfare interventions among these tribal groups. The objectives of the study, the methodology adopted, the data analysis, the findings, the analysis of results and the suggestions are presented here.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the present condition of tribal families in Darbha, in terms of parameters such as income, assets and standards of living.
- To provide an evidence base and data on the impact of migration.
- To establish certain benchmark indicators such as changes in family food security, assets, savings, credit mobilized, etc.
- To identify government interventions on the situation of migration in this area.

METHODOLOGY

The time-frame of the study was from the 6 June 2011 to 15 July 2011. Both techniques—qualitative and quantitative—were used in this study. Purposive sampling was used for selecting the study area and three villages—Kamanar, Chidpal and Chotegudra—were selected. PRADAN assisted in making this selection so that the

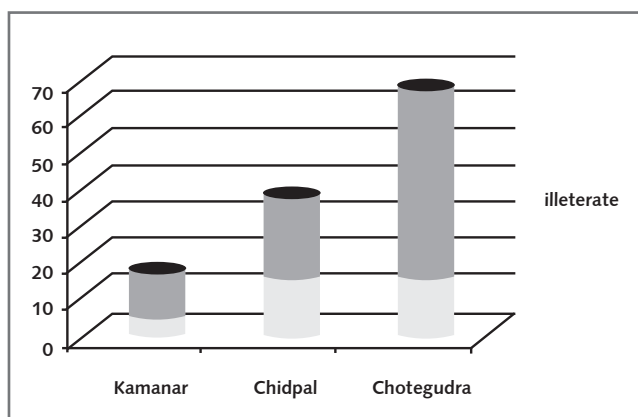
areas from where migration happened massively could be studied.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

- Family Profile: Of the 121 households surveyed, 12 per cent were in the OBC category, 23 per cent were Scheduled Caste (SC) and 67 per cent were Scheduled Tribe (ST). The average number of households in each community were five or six. All the surveyed households lived in *kaccha* houses and had BPL cards as proof that they were indigenous to the area.
- Educational background and working skills.

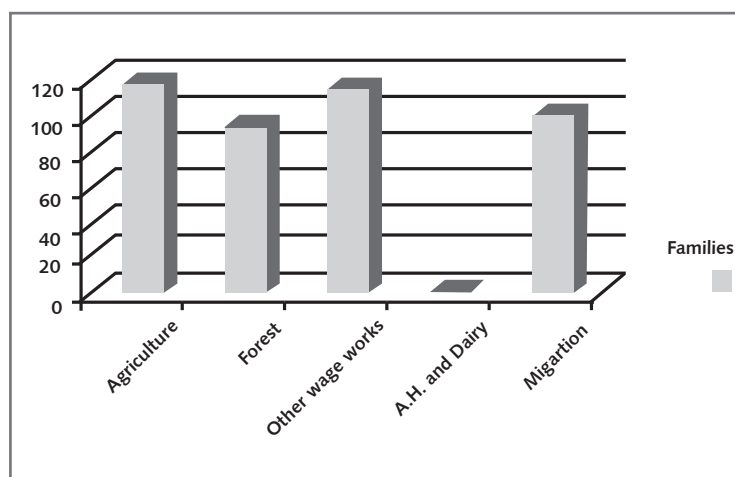
Figure 1 depicts the village-wise literacy among the surveyed households.

Fig. 1. Literacy Counts Village Wise



- Livelihoods: Figure 2 depicts the number of families practising different livelihoods. Most of the families mainly practise two basic natural resource-based livelihoods—agriculture and forest-based work. Apart from this, figure 3 shows the income of the villagers from agriculture, the families

Fig. 2: Families Practising Livelihoods



more than three years ago. Raju's financial position at that time was very bad. The agriculture and labour work available locally was not adequate to feed his family as is clear from the table 1.

The major crop in Bastar is paddy. Those who have large landholdings have surplus to sell after their own requirements.

are also engaged in wage labour and migration.

- d. Experience of migration: Figure 4 clearly shows that there is 80 per cent migration from the 121 households surveyed—that is, an average of two persons from each of the surveyed families or approximately, 202 people migrating from a population of 603.

Our key findings clearly reveal that there is no income from agriculture or from natural resources such as forests. Therefore, in spite of having landholdings, people are migrating to earn a livelihood. When one person from a family migrates, the other members of the family take care of the land.

Figure 5 shows the job descriptions of the surveyed households in the migrated place.

e. Impact of Migration

Case No. 1

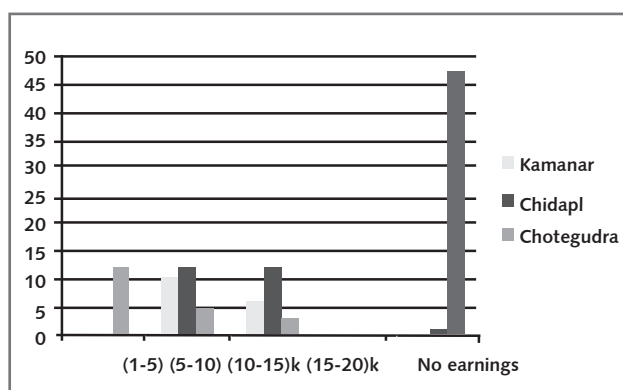
Pagni lives in the hamlet of Naya Kamanar in Chidpal *panchayat*. Her husband, Raju, has been in Andhra Pradesh for the last one-and-a-half years. She had got married to Raju

But Raju never had enough surplus. Besides rice, he would have to buy vegetables and other household goods for his family. He therefore, had to do some work other than farming, provided either by MGNREGA or some private firms. But due to lack of work available, he had to migrate to Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh.

He went to Andhra Pradesh with his friends. The group comprised people who had been to Hyderabad before, so he found a job easily and began to earn well. He worked in a wood company called Raveela Pvt. Ltd. and earned about Rs 4,000 per month after deduction for his boarding and lodging expenses. He has been working in Hyderabad for the past one year.

Pagni told us that he sends money every three months or whenever anyone comes to Bastar. She continues to live a difficult life. She cuts wood from the forest and sells it in the local market to feed herself and her son. Sometimes, she gets paid for some work provided by MGNREGA and sometimes she works in the private working agencies and earns Rs 120–150 daily. She said that Raju

Fig. 3: Village-wise Income from Agriculture



comes home every six months and gives some money (about Rs 2,000–3,000) for her old parents and her and then goes back to Hyderabad within two to three weeks. She gets no support from her parents-in-law because of a land dispute. She gets no food from the produce of their land. She, therefore, has to do more work for her self and her son. According to her, Raju is not fulfilling his responsibility after migration. Whenever he comes home, he is very affectionate but after going back to Hyderabad, he forgets about the family. According to her, he might even have got married to another girl in Hyderabad, but she is not sure about that. She cries whenever he talks to her on the phone from there and pleads with him to come back but he does

whatever he wants without thinking about his family. Pagni has to face many difficulties alone. So, migration is situational and good for Raju but has not worked well for Pagni.

Case No. 2

Sukman is 22 years old and lives at Tikra hamlet in Landra *panchayat*. He owns approximately six or seven acres of land. In season,

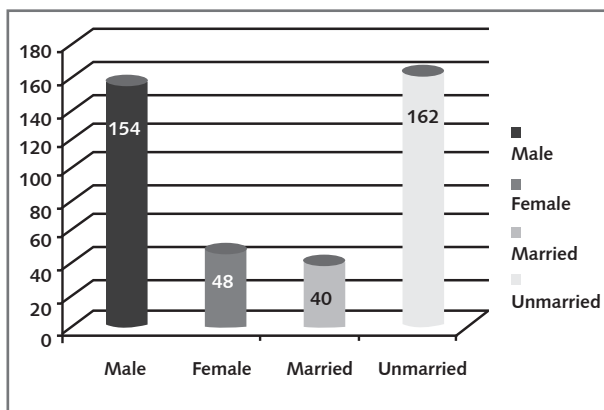
which is about four or five months in a year, he farms his land and for the rest of the year, he migrates to Jagdalpur and works as labour on construction sites and earns daily wages to feed himself and his family. He lives with his mother and his two-year-old child.

He had got married three years ago to Pamma, but within a few months he left for Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh to earn some extra money. He worked there in a stone quarry and earned more money than in his native village. He divided his time between working there and farming in his village. But he found that his mother and his wife faced many problems, especially because he was the only male in the family and he was away at work. The women survived by selling

TABLE 1: ANNUAL INCOME AND EXPENSES OF PAGNI'S HOUSEHOLD

Total landholding	Agriculture earnings per year (Rs)	<--Monthly expenses in rupees-->			TOTAL
		Feeding	Lodging	Others	Others
3 acres	8,000–10,000 in a good season 4,000–6,000 in a bad season	Rs 50 per day ⇒ Rs 1,500 per month	Owens the house	Rs 15 per day for tobacco/liquor ⇒ Rs 450 per month	Approx. Rs 2,000 per month has to be spent

Fig. 4: Gender-wise Migration



wood and doing small jobs around the village. He and his wife had a baby and the monetary help that he sent was erratic and his wife decided to leave him and get married again, leaving the child behind. His mother and his baby stay with him now.

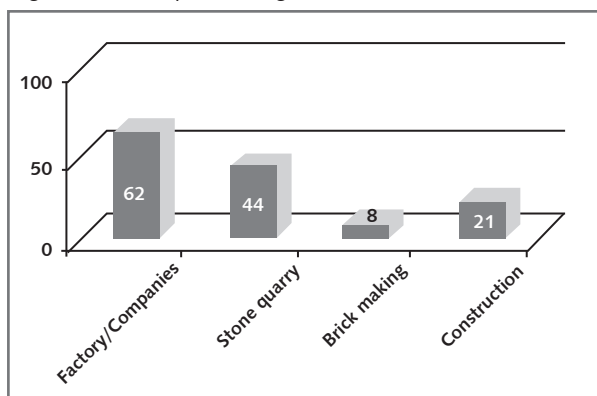
Case 3

Mahadev is very poor and lives in Chidpal village of Pujari hamlet with his wife and daughter. He does not own any land and earns his living by selling wood from the forest. He did some work provided by MGNREGA but he was not satisfied with the payment modality so he no longer wants to work through them. He has made a *kaccha* house on someone else's land. He lives in it for free but he will have to

vacate whenever the owner wants him to. His daughter is young and goes to Jagdalpur with him to work in the construction company and earn daily wages. His monthly expenditure is listed in table 2.

When I asked him if he had tried migrating to earn money, he replied that he had gone to Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and worked in a stone quarry firm. He had worked there for three to four months and,

Fig. 5: Job Description in Migrated Place



during that time, MGNREGA began registering people who wanted to be provided work in his village. He missed the registration and was unable to get a job card. He was, therefore, unable to benefit from the

TABLE 2. MAHADEV'S INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Total Landholding	Agriculture Earnings	<--Monthly Expenses (Rs)			TOTAL
		Feeding	Lodging	Others	
No Land	Does only labour work and earns Rs 120 as daily wages	Rs 40 per day ⇒ Rs 1,200 per month	Owens the house	Rs 10–15 per day for household expenses	About Rs 1,600 per month



government's schemes for the tribal people and has had to work as labour for private companies, which he says are exploiting people. For now, he is very ill and has no money for treatment. He told me that there were many people, who had migrated and could not register in MGNREGA, and they all are facing similar problems.

SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

From these cases, we can surmise that migration has been very difficult and bitter for these people. It has severely affected individuals and families, whether the migration has been situational or forced. The tribal population did not have any other option. Agriculture is the backbone of the farmers; however, in Bastar, the season is only for three to five months; during the rest of the year there is no other option open to the farmers. The government agencies that are supposed to provide supportive schemes to provide livelihood are not doing their job properly.

CONCLUSION

The study of tribal mobility in the Darbha block shows a forced migration pattern among the tribal population. The tribals from this area go to places such as Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab and some local places in Bastar itself to earn their livelihood. The migration is seasonal and takes place mostly during the months of January to April because the places they migrate to have enough work and employment and good working conditions during time period. The proportion of adult women and men is equal among the total migrants. All the migrants from the Darbha are unskilled labour, working in stone quarries, wood mills, powder mills and construction companies and anywhere else where they can find jobs. During migration, the labour depends entirely on the employer for practically all their needs—be it buying daily need items, tobacco and vegetables or money for health care. During the final settlement, all the advances so made are deducted from the payable amount. The



employers reach the villages of migrant labour and pay them advances or other benefits and thereby bind them with an obligation to migrate. Many employers come with tractors to transport the labour. As the number of labourers increase the, per capita wage will reduce.

MGNREGS was flagged off in February 2006 with its basic purpose being to check migration and provide employment at the doorstep of the villagers. But the District

Administration has not provide effective measures to check migration. Consequently, hundreds of people continue to be forced to migrate in search of employment. When the issue was raised, the reaction and response of the people's representatives and the Administration was not very encouraging. We pointed out that despite the employment guarantee, these marginalized families could not secure their Right to Work. The impact of migration has far-reaching effects on the socio-economic life of the

people. The worst affected are the vulnerable women and children. The inhuman conditions in which people live are a denial of their human rights. It is to highlight the reality of migration and establish the fact that the Administration has failed to provide the Right to Work and that the human rights of the people are being violated, that a rapid survey was conducted. The report discusses the situation of migration, its impact on the families especially women and children, hunger as a cause of migration and the extent of deprivation of employment guarantee. Apart from this,

there are some other points which conclude this study:

- ♦ Limited agriculture and less labour (non-initiation of works under MGNREGS, etc.) work are the leading factors for migration from Darbha.
- ♦ The District Administration does not acknowledge that migration exists, so has no effective means to check it.
- ♦ Better savings options at the migrated place.
- ♦ The unskilled and illiterate population is targeted for forced migration.
- ♦ Migration is rampant in Darbha block.