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Pros and Cons of Migration in Punjab

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Abstract:

In this paper I have discussed the pros and cons of migration from other states to Punjab. The problems faced by them, their rootlessness and the changing economic status of poor families in their hometowns are discussed with reference to the state of Punjab. The migrants go through teething troubles after coming to a new place, face a lot of sociological and psychological dilemmas which sometimes breaks them and sometimes saves them. The economic help which they send to their home state is used by them for development of their homes and families but the state in which they have migrated faces more crime, more illiteracy, more population and more problems of employment. The local population loses the job opportunities while the migrants grab the opportunity with both hands and are exploited by the rich landowners and industrialists and given low wages. They are subjected to inhuman and unhygienic conditions and are exploited physically, mentally, psychologically as well as sexually.

1. Introduction

As defined by Lee, "Migration is permanent or semi-permanent change of residence". Migration has been the key word in modern history. Man has migrated from one place to another since ancient time. We too, as Aryans have migrated from far-off places to the fertile lands of Punjab. When a person changes a place of his residence it brings about lots of changes in his life. Social interaction, social groups, cultural changes, social mobility, new obligations and new duties along with new problems arise in the new places of residence. The results of migration are manifold- wanderers become settlers; semi-permanent become permanent; uneducated become educated; temporary become permanent and poor become rich. Whenever a person migrates, he creates a new area for himself – new jobs, new friends, new opportunities and new social circles.

2. Why Migrate?

Why do people move from one place to another is a vital question. The answer lies in the fact that as the land holdings have reduced, income has decreased, crime rates have gone up, people move to greener pastures or places where there is a shortage of labour, lots of industrialization, need for temporary and permanent servants and scope of earning more money and uplifting their social status. Although migrants face lots of adverse conditions and face psychological pressure and are always in the limelight and need to adjust with the natives, still they migrate. In Punjab, the labour migration from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and other states is greatly influenced by the receding land-man ratio, poverty, caste system, lawlessness and exploitation by the ruling class. Job opportunities have reduced and work culture has deteriorated and the workers who migrate from these states do so because of large families to feed, natural calamities like flood or famine and lack of opportunities in their state. Punjab being one of the most developed agricultural state of India needs temporary and permanent labour from these states. Some come there for the paddy season while others for working in industries, while still many others come here to settle down. Migrants have a higher tendency to participate in the labour force. Their need for immediate income and their willingness to work for low status and low wages and for more hours induces the landowners and factory owners to exploit them.

In the overall scenario, migration of labour for agricultural purposes is beneficial because a significant decline was seen in the charges for harvesting, transplanting paddy and annual rates of contract of a permanent "sanjhi". In Punjab men and women who come from UP and Bihar and other states arrive with minimal goods and leave for their native places– better qualified, better off economically and better skilled. They develop better lifestyles and in comparison with others at home, they give better education to their children and help their families with money and other remittances like housing and medical facilities.

When we study migration in Punjab from the view point of a layman, we find that three out of four households include a migrant whether in the urban or rural areas. Seasonal migration is strongly prevalent in the villages while permanent and semi-permanent

migration is seen in the urban areas. In industrialized cities like Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Gobindgarh, Khanna, Batala and Rajpura we found that migrants prefer to settle down permanently along with their families. They buy houses, educate their children, develop good social relations, but the labour migrants who work in the rolling mills and furnaces do not do so. There is a vast difference in the attitude of the workers who had come to Punjab 30-40 years back while the younger generation is pouring in even now. The older generation has not only bought houses, have ration cards, made their voter cards and are even running for election in the industrialized cities. These so called migrants are now respectable and permanent settlers of the state of Punjab. While we as Punjabi's are not allowed to buy land in any other state, these migrants are enjoying this facility in our state.

The position is not always goody-goody. There are adverse repercussions of migration. The families that they leave behind suffer mentally, psychologically as well as physically. Neglected children, weak marital bonds and finally broken families are the result of migration. Migrants hard earned money is wasted on consumption, payment of debt and useless social functions. The values, beliefs are challenged. When they migrate, they lose not only their families, homes, communities, but also their language and their status within their communities. Migration brings about family problems as the males do not return to the villages for some time or forever. This results in divorces and re-marriages or even bigamy.

Impact of migration is that the poor migrant workers have to live in deplorable conditions without any provision of basic amenities like drinking water or hygienic sanitation. The work conditions are the worst as they are un-hygienic and the labour suffers from serious occupational health problems and are vulnerable to diseases. Those working in rolling mills and furnaces suffer from lung diseases, body ache, sun stroke and skin diseases which eventually lead them to death in their prime. As the employer does not follow safety measures, accidents are very frequent. For women migrant labour there is no provision of leave, which forces them to resume work immediately after illness or childbirth. They are also bereft of separate civic amenities. As their children accompany them to the workplace, they are forced to be exposed to health hazards as well as sexual harassment. The women labour are paid less than the migrant male and face greater insecurity because they are badly exploited and sexually harassed.

Migration affects both the societies-society from which the migrant comes and the society to which he migrates. Migration has a profound effect on population and culture of both the places. The politics and the policies change according to the migrants' needs. Cultural diversity is brought about like the "Chathh Puja" and "Ganesh Visarjan" in Punjab and they celebrate our festival in their native places. Their traditions and rituals are brought into the city in which they settle. One of the negative impact of migration of the criminal mind has been increase in crime rate in cities and overstretch of the local resources which has further worsened the environment and created more pollution of all types-thoughts, action and environment. Drug menace has increased abundantly as "beedhies", "tambacoo", "guthka" is available in every nook and corner of the streets. This has led to drug abuse by local Punjabi youth, which has created social problems in the society.

In the end, we can say that migration from one area to another is a key feature of human history. The burning examples are the movement of the people from middle Asia to Europe and Indian continent by the Mughals and the Aryans. If we want to solve the problem of migration, we should ensure that all states should be developed evenly, industry should set up in every state, so that the local population has no need to move from one state to another for earning their livelihood. There is an urgent need to manage, verify and authenticate the credentials of all the migrants coming to live in the state of Punjab temporarily or permanently. A labour market monitoring authority should be set up so that the migrants are given proper wages by their employers and sensitized by recruitment agencies for getting the jobs according to their skills. The human rights commission should be rejuvenated so that their human rights are not violated and their basic rights and entitlements ensured. This will help in reducing the crime and also discourage the criminal minds from migrating to other states and committing crimes.

3. References

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