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## Factors Affecting Migration of Workers in Brick Industry with Special Reference to Barpeta District of Assam

Mayuree Das

Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, Assam, India

### Abstract:

Brick industry is highly a labour intensive industry which can provide employment opportunities to a large number of unemployed persons. The industry provides employment opportunities not only to the local workers, but also to the migrant workers. Workers who come from different districts within the same state as well as from other states can also get employment opportunities in brick industry. Barpeta district is mainly based on agriculture. Though the district is mainly based on agriculture, yet a good number of brick industries have been developed in different parts of the district which help in generating income and employment. In this paper, an attempt is made to study the factors responsible for migration of workers in brick industry of Barpeta district of Assam and also to study some other aspects relating to migration such as age, education, wage, working and living conditions of migrant workers.

**Keywords:** Brick industry, worker, migration, factors, condition

### 1. Introduction

Bricks are indispensable component of each and every construction activity. India is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest brick producer in the world just after China producing close to 140 billion bricks a year (Khan, 2008). Indian brick industry is highly labour intensive. It provides employment opportunities not only to the local workers but also to the migrant workers. A person who moves from one place to another in search of works is termed as migrant worker. Generally entire family comprising husbands, wives and children migrate to the kiln sites and works as one unite. However their migration is highly seasonal. They migrate to the kiln sites and live there for 6-7 months in a year.

Gursharan Singh Kainth (2009) in his paper “push and pull factors of migration: A case of brick kiln industry of Punjab state” tried to analyze the various factors responsible for migration in brick kilns. Migration was caused by many factors such as economic, social, political, cultural, environment, health, education etc. Majority of the migrant workers were young in age, illiterate or having low level of education and belonged to SC/ST. Better job opportunities, industrial development and comparatively higher wages in Punjab attracted the brick kiln workers whereas lack of job opportunities at native place compelled them to migrant.

D.P Singh (2005) in his paper “women workers in the brick kiln industry in Haryana, India” revealed that brick production depended almost entirely on migrant workers, half of them were women. The author tried to examine various aspects relating to family, migration, women’s working conditions and the socio-economic levels of the women workers and their families in the brick industry of Haryana and underlined the fact that these workers had a very tough life.

### 2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are-

- i. To find out the factors responsible for migration of workers in brick industries.
- ii. To study some other aspects relating to migration such as age, education, family size, wage, working and living conditions of workers etc.

### 3. Methodology and Data Collection

The study is mainly based on primary data collection. The information and data has been collected by conducting field survey. In Barpeta district, good numbers of the brick industries are located in Bhatkuchi, Borbila, Saderi, Pathsala, Choulabori etc. For collecting the data, 3 brick industries of Barpeta district of Assam is visited randomly. A set of structured questionnaire was prepared and the required data was collected from 90 migrant workers, 30 from each industry. Data are presented in the form of tables’ for easy understanding. However, some secondary data are also used from various books, article, newspaper, internet etc.

### 4. Migration and Its Factors Affecting the Works in the Brick Industry

Migration is one of the most important aspects affecting the works in brick industries. Brick industry employs large number of migrant workers including men, women and children. Their migration is highly seasonal. They come to the brick industry along with

the whole families and live in the kiln sites for 6-7 months in a year. They leave the kiln sites during monsoon when production stops due to rain.

Migration	Frequencies	Percentage
From nearby villages and towns within the same district	47	52.2
From different districts within the same state	27	30
From other state	16	17.8
Total	90	100

Table 1: Migration among the workers in selected brick industries:

Source: Based on Field Survey

After surveying, it is found that 52.2% workers migrant from nearby villages and towns within the same district. 30% workers migrate from different districts within the same state. The districts from where the workers migrate to the selected brick industries are Nalbari, Bongaigoan, Kokrajhar and Odalguri. Again 17.8% workers migrate from other states like Bihar, West Bengal etc.

Migration in brick industry is affected by many factors. These factors can be classified into 2 basic categories namely Push and Pull factors.

The push factors are those that compel a person to leave the original place of work and go to some other place in search of employment. Some factors like poverty, irregular availability of the works, indebtedness etc may force a person to leave his native place and go to some other place in search of works.

The pull factors are those factors which attract a person to move to an area where he has the opportunities of getting higher wages for the same work that he would has received in his native place, better employment opportunities, better working condition etc. Pull factors do not compel a person to leave his native place; rather it attracts a person move to another place.

Factors	Frequencies	Percentage
poverty	41	45.6
Unable to get other employment opportunities	19	21.1
Opportunities of getting higher wages	6	6.7
Irregular availability of work	11	12.2
To pay off debt	9	10
Opportunities of attaining higher standard of living	4	4.4
Total	90	100

Table 2: Factors responsible for migration of workers in the 3 selected brick industries:

Source: Based on Field Survey

The survey reveals that 45.6% workers migrate to the selected brick industries due to poverty of the family, 21.1% workers migrate because they are unable to get other employment opportunities as they are illiterate. So they come and work in brick industry as unskilled labour, 6.7% workers migrate to the selected brick industries because for the same work, they are provided lower wages in their native places. Thus opportunities of getting higher wages have attracted them to migrate. Again, 12.2% workers migrate due to irregular availability of work. As in the brick industry they get employment opportunities for 6-7 months regularly, so they prefer to migrate to the brick industry. 10% workers migrate to pay off debt taking by the whole family and remaining 4.4% migrate to get the chances of attaining higher standard of living.

Nature	Frequencies	Percentage
Migrate alone	27	30
Migrate along with the whole family	63	70
Total	90	100

Table 3: Nature of migration of workers:

Source: Based on Field Survey

The table 3 reflects the nature of migration of the workers. Majority of workers (70%) migrate along with their whole families to the selected brick industries. Only 30% workers migrate alone.

Age group	Frequencies	Percentage
20-29	23	25.6
30-39	45	50
40 & above	22	24.4
Total	90	100

Table 4: Age group of the migrant workers in the 3 selected brick industries:

Source: Based on Field Survey

The table highlights that majority of the migrant workers belong to the age group 30-39 i.e. 50% belong to this age group. 25.6% belong to the age group 20-29 and 24.4% belong to 40 & above.

<b>Educational status</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Illiterate	56	62.2
Between class I-III	20	22.2
Between class IV-VI	14	15.6
Total	90	100

*Table 5: Educational scenario of the migrant workers in the 3 selected brick industries:  
Source: Based on Field Survey*

The survey reveals that 62.2% migrant workers are illiterate, 22.2% have the education between class I-III and remaining 15.6% have the education between classes IV-VI. So the educational scenario of the migrant workers is not at all satisfactory.

<b>Size of family</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1-4 members	57	63.3
5-8 members	25	27.8
9 & above	8	8.9
Total	90	100

*Table 6: Size of family of the migrant workers:  
Source: Based on Field Survey*

The survey reflects that 63.3% workers have 1-4 members in their families, 27.8% have 5-8 members and remaining 8.9% have 9 & above members.

<b>Types of works</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Preparation of raw bricks	39	43.3
Shifting of sun dried bricks for stacking in kilns	25	27.8
Covering the stack of dry bricks prior to firing	10	11.1
Firing of bricks	16	17.8
Total	90	100

*Table 7: Types of works done by the migrant workers in the 3 selected brick industries:  
Source: Based on Field Survey*

Regarding the types of works done by the migrant workers, the survey reveals that most of the workers are involved in the preparation of raw bricks i.e. mixing the earth with water and shaping them into bricks. 43.3% workers are involved in preparation of raw bricks. 27.8% are involved in shifting of sun dried bricks for stacking in kilns. 11.1% are involved in covering the stack of dry bricks prior to firing and 17.8% are involved in firing the bricks.

#### **5. Wage Structure Received by the Migrant Workers:**

In brick industry, most of the workers get their wages on the basis of piece rate system. Payments to the workers who are involved in the preparation of raw bricks i.e. mixing the earth with water and shaping them into bricks are made on weekly basis. They are made Rs. 410 per 1000 raw bricks.

Workers who are involved in shifting of sun dried bricks for stacking in kilns also get their wages on weekly basis. They get Rs. 120 per 1000 bricks.

Payments to the workers who are involved in covering the stack of dry bricks prior to firing are made on fortnight basis. They are provided Rs. 2500 per round of covering the stack of dry bricks. To complete one round, they require 15 days.

Workers who are involved in firing the bricks are made monthly payment. They are paid Rs. 750 per 1000 bricks.

<b>Save in</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Post office	6	6.7
No saving	84	93.3
Total	90	100

*Table 8: Savings habit of the migrant workers:  
Source: Based on Field Survey*

The survey reflects that 6.7% workers save in Post office. But 93.3% workers have no savings. The entire money is spent on consumption.

Asset holding	Frequencies		Percentage	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Bicycle	78	12	86.7	13.3
Mobile phone	82	8	91.1	8.9
Both	72	18	80	20

Table 9: Asset holdings of the migrant workers:

Source: Based on Field Survey

Regarding asset holding, the survey reflects that 86.7% workers have bicycle, but 13.3% do not. Again, 91.1% workers have mobile phone, but 8.9% do not. However, 80% workers have both.

## 6. Issues Regarding Health and Hygiene

Regarding hygiene, the survey shows that workers in brick industry work in a very unhealthy environment. Migrant workers live along with their families in small huts constructed by the owner of the industry. But in such type of huts, no facilities of electricity are provided. The facility of separate kitchen is absent in such type of huts. There is no proper source of drinking water. No proper filtration system is provided. Hand pumps are the primary source of drinking water. There is no proper sanitation facility.

Regarding health, it is found that workers work in the field for a long period in a day i.e. up to 9-10 hours in a day. So they suffer from various types of health problems such as back pain, fever, eye problem, skin disease, headache, respiratory disorders and so on. Medical facilities provided to them are not at all satisfactory. No dispensary is found near and there in the industry.

Again, due to low income, workers are not able to consume good foods having high nutritional values. The owners of the industries provide no ration facilities to the workers. So the health conditions of the workers are deteriorating.

## 7. Summary of Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

The survey shows that workers from different villages and towns within the same district, from different districts within the same state as well from other states also migrate to the selected brick industries due to various factors such as lack of employment opportunities, poor economic condition of their family, to pay off debt taken by the whole family, chances of getting higher wages, chances of attaining higher standard of living etc.

Majority of migrant workers are illiterate who do not have even the basic education. So, adult education programme for the workers in the brick industry should be introduced to make them aware of their rights and duties.

Majority of workers migrate to the industry along with their families including women and children. So child labour is very extensive in brick industry. These children are found to be engaged in different types of works in order to help their parents and to maximize the income of the family. These children do not go to the school. So, special arrangements should be made for child education. Again, work load and work age regulations should be strictly enforced to remove child labour from the society.

Regarding the wages, the survey shows that the workers receive their wages on weekly, fortnightly and monthly basis. The income they receive is so low that most of their income is spent on consumption. Majority of the workers do not have any savings. So there is an urgent need for the wages to go up significantly.

The living and working condition of the migrant workers are also found to be very deplorable. They live in small huts made by the owner of the industry. But proper facilities of electricity, water, sanitation are totally absent in such type of huts. So these facilities should be provided properly. Proper medical facilities should also be provided to the workers as they suffer from various types of diseases from time to time.

In conclusion, it can be said that as labour is the most important aspect of brick industry, so government should also take each and every possible step for the well-being of the labour class.

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