

Consequences of Hill Migration in Tarai:

Frontier expansion and emerging livelihood diversification opportunity for Dalits labor

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the knowledge of the migration process from Hill to Tarai as a "means of livelihood opportunity" for Tarai Dalit agricultural laborers. I explore the question of what is positive happening when Hill people migrate to Tarai. An increasing number of people in the world are migrating to improve or secure their livelihoods; the migrant population not only benefits himself but facilitates other inhabitant peoples too. Migration plays a vital role in the host community towards opportunity production and social support. Migrants, in this context, serve as a means to access different livelihood opportunities in the formal/informal sectors' economy inside/outside their home villages. Despite this, migrants are rarely acknowledged as a promoting means of livelihood diversification for poor Dalit laborers. The objective of this study is to discover knowledge gaps against the "Hill migrants exploited Tarai people and encroaching Tarai resources" In contrast to this, the research establishes the claim the question that how Hill migrates in Tarai contributes significantly to expanding activities of boundary for local labors' livelihood opportunity. Do such things support Dalit labor livelihoods? Is there any positive effort made by Hill people in rural communities to shape Dalit Musahar's lives? It is acknowledged that migrant people in receiving or host communities produce various new spaces in non-agricultural sectors for job opportunities. Researching this phenomenon in Baijanathpur Village in Biratnagar Morang, the Researcher discusses migration and livelihood diversification theoretical conceptual debate, applying a qualitative in-depth interview method.

Key Words:- Migration, Dalit, livelihood diversification, Tarai village, host community

Introduction

It has been estimated that the Baijanathpur Village is formed by migrant people. The Village structure perceived the uniqueness of the migrant field as; apart from the native Tharu and Khabas, most of the population are migrated either from internal processes (Hill region and neighboring districts) or from Indian migrants. The village is a domain destination for both Hill and Indian migrants in population composition (Dahal, 1983). So, the social structure is observed as a migrant-dominated place. The habitus and field are accordingly shaped by these migrant people. However, agriculture was the only field

structured with native landlords, small farmers, Dalit laborers, Hill migrant farmers, and Indian Dalit laborers. The habitus is diverse (Bourdieu, 1986) according to the compositional structure of the community. The study field is interrelated, interacted, and conducted action between Dalit laborers and Hill migrants.

Migration is the principal element to bring social change to entire societies. Migration and mobility are widespread social facts in the world since human evolution in the earliest time of human society, for instance, hunting-gathering to now. Since human history, it has been a continuous process occurrence in the world. An increasing number of people in the entire world are migrating and diversifying their sources of income through migration (Thieme, 2008; Manning, p and Trimmer, T 2013; 2020, Al- Khudairy, S. I. A., 2024: 31) to improve or secure their lives and livelihoods. In other words, migration is the movement of people from one location, or region, to another. However, while some migrants ultimately become permanent settlers of the country or region to which they do not have mobile, some migrant people usually move to plan to remain only temporarily in the destination location. Internal migration, or domestic migration, is the movement of people within a single country, either from rural to urban areas or, in reverse, from the city to the country (Bailey, 2010). However, migration has traditionally been conceptualized as an individual or family member undertaking as a part of a better life or sustainable/permanent livelihood. It has always been predominantly collective endeavors that result from significant social, economic and political change under the conditions of modernization and globalization (Castles et al. 2014). The migration encouraged to produce significant impact in both host and origin countries. For this reason, the search for a more comprehensive understanding of the causes and consequences of migrants is highly significant.

In other words, migration is understood as a spatial separation between the location of a resident household or family (Panday, 2008), and one or more livelihood activities engaged by family members, which is a central feature of the livelihoods of the majority of households in low-income countries (Ellis, 2003). Migration is the temporary or permanent movement of individuals or groups of people from one geographic location to another for various reasons, ranging from better employment possibilities.

Analysis of migration patterns is very important to understand the changes taking place in the people's movement within the region. Migration is the most volatile component of population growth and the most sensitive to economic, political and cultural factors. The gradual development of the economy of certain places and the requirement of specific skills in different kinds of industries and services, along with changing policies of selective welcoming of a particular type of human, have resulted in the emergence of new patterns of migration (Pandey, 2008).

Understanding the migration trend from Hill to Tarai, or rural to rural areas of Tarai, Nepal is exemplary of such cases where people desire a better livelihood (Gurung, 2002) however; Hill people are migrating to this village due to the availability of fertile land,

induced by social networks and other material facilities. The migration population not only benefited him but facilitated other inhabitants too. In Nepal, historical evidence shows that migration to the Tarai increased after the eradication of malaria in the late 1950s and has been increasing ever since (Kc, 1997; Gadtaula and Neihof n.d.). Internal migration in Nepal has long played a significant role in Nepali society; it also brings significant contributions to the host community.

After the eradication of malaria in Tarai, migration from Hills to Tarai increased drastically, which was basically for the land and permanent settlement in Tarai (Adhikari, 2008 p3). Individuals or households migrate not only to maximize absolute income but also to improve their position compared to other relevant reference groups (Bhandari, P. 2013). The main reason for migration was the economic disparities between the Hill and Tarai. The push factors in the Hills have been much more influential than the pull factors of the Tarai in determining migratory trends. Niroula (1995) provided a detailed description of recent internal migration based on census data from 1991. He concluded that Hill to Tarai migration is the dominant flow of migration.

Materials and Methods

This article has attempted to explore the conceptual and theoretical discourses of the migration process and objectively investigate the consequences of migration, which contribute to supporting Dalit labor's livelihood diversification in Baijanathpur Village of Tarai in Morang District. It is in contrast to the conventional understanding of the migration research paradigm such as demographic changes, push and pull factors of migration (or geographical variation) and remittance earnings.

Methodically, it explores the Dalit livelihood practice in agriculture as wage labor who was bonded labor in the past, presenting of existing situation of livelihood diversification outside of agriculture, applying qualitative in-depth interview method used to primary data and other relevant secondary information sources to explore Dalit perception towards the Hill migrant contribution in the local area to diversify livelihood activities, bonded labor towards free non-agriculture. Individual-level interviews and observation methods were used for data collection in Baijanathpur Village. The main target group is the Dalit laborers recognized as local agricultural laborers and some migrated key informants. These local laborers are defined as those laborers who have stayed in a village for more than fifty years and working in the agriculture sector for more than five decades attached to the landlords. The laborers considered here, as sample respondents, are 20 persons within near about 50 households, was bonded with landlords, considering older and younger people are selected as research sample.

Theoretical Debate in Migration and Livelihood

The livelihoods of all Tarai people have depended on agriculture since the very beginning, but the social relation among people is beyond understanding. The ancient historian narrates only Rana rulers, their subordinates, and landlords (Regmi, 1976) but

ignores his agricultural labors and livelihood challenges. There is a dearth of literature about agriculture scholars who paid very little attention to migrated people's contributions and took charge in the host Tarai community, e.g. efforts to expense all his capital, assets, and other resources. The livelihood trajectory and misery to hope both shape the wage labor life in Tarai. However, Tarai Dalit laborers could not feed themselves and their family members from agricultural work. However, the livelihoods of all Tarai Dalit laborers have depended on agriculture since the very beginning, but the social relation with migrants is beyond understanding. There were no places to search for other livelihood options apart from agricultural labor because Tarai did not pay attention to establishing alternative sources of livelihood from the Nepali Government and policymakers (Chandrakishor, 2006).

The migration theory is varied (Messey, 1993) and debatable. Analysis of migration patterns is very important to understand the changes taking place in the people's movement within the region. Migration is the most volatile component of population growth and the most sensitive to economic, political and cultural factors. Livelihood and migration character is related to the livelihood diversification of people in developing countries (Ellis, 2003). Livelihood diversification has been theories regarding the sociology of migration. The migration process is in contrast to mainstream development economics (Ellis, 2003; Hussain and Nelson, 2002), but livelihood diversification has a knowledge gap in the sense of the role of economic transformation and opportunity creation in the host community by the migrated people.

Migration is becoming an important livelihood strategy for people. Migrants have encouraged Dalit laborers to escape from agricultural mud soil and establish themselves in dryland areas. The livelihoods approach is used to explain the diversity and complexity of how people make a living. It addresses the living conditions of poor people, their opportunities and capacities for well-being, their resilience and their resource base composed of various assets (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Theoretical explanation of migratory movement or migration began about more than a century ago, which was different in different parts of the world (Manning, p and Trimmer, T. (2013). However, the scientific study of migration is comparatively recent. Social scientists, e.g. Geographers, economists, and sociologists, have developed many theories and models to explain "Why people move?" Some classical and modern scholars' related fields have explained theoretical and empirical levels in their studies, where they are mostly constrained to the identification and features of migrants in various parts of the world. The process of urbanization is an intrinsic dimension of economic and social development, and in consequence, both developed and developing countries are going through the process of migrating from predominantly rural to predominantly urban societies, for individual migration is often a rational and dynamic effort to seek new opportunities in life.

Ellis'(2003) livelihood theory is a framework that seeks to understand the complexities of poverty and the strategies that people use to cope with and overcome

it. The theory emphasizes the importance of looking at livelihoods holistically, taking into account the various assets and resources that people have at their disposal, including natural, physical, financial, human, and social capital. Diversification is a key means for households to reduce and manage risk, often when faced with shocks such as natural disasters or conflict. It is therefore important to recognize the complexity and variety of different types of migration. Migration may be seasonal, permanent or circular; it may take place between urban and rural areas and may occur within countries or across international borders. Migration patterns may also vary with gender or age: in some contexts, young men may be the primary migrants, while in others women may be more likely to migrate to find employment as domestic workers; in some cases, elderly people are more likely not to migrate.

People's livelihood strategies are shaped by a variety of factors, including market opportunities, access to resources and services, and social and cultural norms. He also highlights the importance of understanding how different livelihood strategies can interact and complement each other, such as through diversification or migration. Overall, Ellis' livelihood theory provides a framework for understanding the complex and dynamic nature of migration and livelihood diversification as a holistic approach that takes into account the multidimensional nature of poverty. This approach has influenced development policies and programs aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods, such as efforts to improve access to education and health care, support small-scale agriculture, and promote microfinance and entrepreneurship (Ellis, 1998).

Worldwide, an increasing number of people are diversifying their income sources of livelihood through migration. This mobility in most cases involves only parts of the family migrating, and this results in people's livelihoods taking on a multi-local dimension (Thieme, S. 208). Internal migration is one of the important paradigms of the changing socio-economic conditions at the national level and also a sign of disparities in overall conditions between the origin and destination of migration, especially in developing countries. Internal migration redistributes people in terms of resources, work participation, industrial attachment, job opportunities, housing facilities, etc. Gurung, S.B. and Butchman H (1973) studied that the prime reason for migration in Nepal is the absence of other activities outside of agriculture, which has blocked their chances to earn fortunes, which the majority of the Hilly people have to spend life in absolute poverty. This is one factor that compels them to move southward in the hope of getting employment opportunities within the country.

Tacoli (1998, 2002, 2003), emphasized the "rural-urban continuum" and rural-urban interaction theory. She claims that migration is a natural response to the uneven development between rural and urban areas. The theory argues that migration is a process of seeking economic opportunities, and in this case, people from the Hills are moving towards urban centers in search of better-paying jobs, education and healthcare facilities. Hill-to-Tarai migration has always been a hot and contentious issue (Saud, 2023) and takes

place in contrast to anti-political movements in Nepal. In light of the present population and migration scenario, there is a critical need to evaluate and address the trend and pattern of migration in Tarai and how they construct job opportunities for Dalits. Hill to Tarai migration is not a case of remittance sender to the Hill family from Tarai. However, it is a long-term and permanent settlement in the Tarai social structure.

Discussing these migration theories, in contrast to others Messy explores (2008), pays attention to migrants' livelihood strategy and their well-being in life; furthermore, it emphasizes receiving or host societies' development and significant contribution through migrants. However, it contrasted with the above argument, where migrant contribution and opportunity production in host society are either salient or less discussed. So, the researcher endeavors to explore the migrant's contribution to produce job opportunities where local Dalit laborers benefit from these opportunities to diversify their livelihood.

Result and Discussion

Migration and mobility are always a debating subject under discussion in the academic community; it is not only a matter of push and pull factors than anything else. However, the reasons for migration and its trend are closely linked to the livelihood strategy. In search of the result of Hill migration in Tarai, it is adopting a historical methodology to discuss its consequences for Tarai Dalit's livelihood. Applied in-depth interviews to elucidate the major incident that Dalits labor achievement is discussed as a result.

Migration is a form of spatial mobility in different geographical units (Castle et al. 2014). Most of the migrants are from farming backgrounds or from the agriculture sector (Pyakurel et.al 2011) either Hill to Tarai or rural to rural. Migration makes the connection between population mobility and livelihood earning (Ellis, 2003). It is said that migrated people in receiving society, increase labor demand either in farm or non-farm sector house building and other construction works, similarly domestic work for Dalit women. Hill migrants produce various spaces for livelihood opportunities where native people engage with these opportunities. Migration literature (Winer, 1976; De Haan, 2002) supports that migration not only supports economic benefit but development for sending country/community, but it plays a vital role in hosting/receiving community towards "job production, entrepreneurship, social supporting and integration between people (Winer, 1976; De Haan, 2002), in contrast to the arguments produced by scholars that migrants "exploitation to the resources and local people in host Community/country". The migration process from Hill to Tarai known as a source of livelihood of Tarai Dalit against conventional knowledge produced that "Hill people exploited Tarai people."

Various measures that encouraged settlement in the Tarai are: land reform, land tax reduction and infrastructure construction. The migration from Hills to Tarai is increasing and this can be explained by pull factors such as resettlement programs, availability of fertile arable land, employment opportunities and better communication and transportation facilities. The intensity of the Hill to Tarai movement increases from east to west Tarai.

The reason for this lies in the historic settlement structure of Nepal (Ojha, 1983; Shrestha 1998), the respective literature and statistical data (Gaige, 1975, Gurung 2002, Census Report, up to 2011) show that the trend of internal migration especially from Hill to Tarai is quickly increasing after the eradication of malaria in Tarai after the fifties. It has become the prime destination of the Hill people of Nepal.

Migration leads to the reconstruction of space when people migrate from one place to the other. For a long, Tarai has had rich and fertile agricultural land, it has become a prime destination for Hill people after the malaria eradication program (Gadtaula and Neifof, 2008; Budhathoki, 2013). After the eradication of malaria in Tarai, migration from Hills to plain areas increased drastically, which was basically for the land and permanent settlement; individuals or households migrate not only to maximize absolute income but also to improve their position compared to other relevant reference groups (Bhandari, 2013).

Migration is an individual or group action decided to search for a better life chance. Hill migrants in lowland Tarai are migrating as permanent settlers for sustainable livelihoods rather than remittance earners for families and households. Most Hill migrants, however, are never concerned about collecting remittance to send their family members; they imagine only permanent settlement in Tarai. Only very few people are mobile Hill to Tarai temporarily/seasonally for remittance collection. Most Hill migrants sold their all property and invested in Tarai. They mostly invested their property in infrastructure development like house construction, business and service sectors, which produce job opportunities for Dalit laborers in Tarai migrated places (Saud, 2023). For instance, Dalits easily diversified their livelihood from the agriculture-bonded hardware-charge labor identity (Dhakal, 2013) into the free non-farm labor identity. The Hill migrant people contributed significantly to producing many more non-farm sector jobs in the construction sector, where Dalit laborers changed their past identity due to Hill migrant contribution in Tarai. The hidden factors are very few addressed by scholars in Tarai's studies. Most of the scholars pay attention to questions about the Hill migrant negative consequences; however, they do not provide a clear idea about the Hill migrant's contribution to the host Tarai community.

Historically, Hill-to-Tarai migration has been explained as a discourse claim as “Hill migrant exploitation” upon the Tarai people. Scholars claim that Pahade landlords have more land ownership in Tarai (Hatlebakk, 2013); however, Hill migrant landlords are very few, with a relatively high volume of Madhesi landlords than migrants. Considering the empirical evidence and village-level population data, Baijanathpur Village is recognized as having more Dalit domination in population composition than other migrant and non-migrant castes (Statistical Office, 2070, DDC profile 2070). A small number of Pahade people are landlords; more are smallholders, some are peasants, and some are sharecroppers and wage laborers. In some cases, Pahade himself is poor and vulnerable in Tarai like native Dalit people. Even though, migrants are recognized as reliable sources

of labor power and are considered to labor. Contrastingly, in the study area, Madhesi are the dominant landlords in numbers and power holders compared to Pahade landlords, but they do not perceive the Dalit as like Hill migrants. A young Musahar Dalit woman key informant put her contrasting argument about the "Hill peoples exploited to Dalit" narration. She put forward unhappiness and exposed that we Musahar are not exploited by Hill People; however, Madhesi landlord exploited us because we belonged to them for a long period. However, Hill people migrate here, and Musahar has been enjoying various job opportunities produced by Hill migrants. Madhesi people do not produce jobs of this kind; if they do, his caste community group engages at first. The loss of land by Dalits is not the only cause of Pahade exploitation. It is acknowledged that most Dalit groups in Tarai are historically landless, although they have some land they sold to fulfill their own self-requirements and social obligations because there were no other alternative income sources.

Baijanathpur is one of the Dalit-dominated Villages in Morang district in eastern Tarai. The people of this village are very poor, marginalized, and landless. They are engaged mainly in land-based labor activities. But have no land ownership in their name (Rayamajhi, 2015). In this village, land is a major resource for livelihood. Most of the land in Baijanathpur Village is owned by native Tharu, Rajbansi and high-caste elite groups who live in Biratnagar city. Migrant Hill people have low and medium sizes of land. Dalit people provide their labor power to the landowner because they have no access to land resources and food to survive their household family on very low wages as kind or money. There exist very limited opportunities for income for resilience from vulnerability (Iverson, 2013).

The consequences of migration have both positive and negative impacts on the host community. Migration can lead to increased cultural diversity, cooperation, and interdependence between migrants and native people. Migration closes to the economy; however, migrants arrive with skills and ideas that contribute to the human capital development of the host community (Taylor and Martin, 2001). Migrants also contribute to knowing new technological processes and new ways of working, ideas and skills. Migration, in this context, serves as a means for them to access different livelihoods and opportunities outside their home villages. Despite this, migration is rarely acknowledged as a livelihood strategy for the poor. Migration is an interdependent process, driving change and stimulating new connections between individuals and societies. It induces social solidarity in the host community. Human mobility is a means to diversify and strengthen livelihoods (Pugh, S. et al, 2016). Migration induces occupational diversification as a new livelihood strategy for Dalit workers. Migration has also changed domestic labor dynamics, labor markets, and labor wages, which contribute to reducing gender disparity in wages and work (Upreti, 2010)

It acknowledged in field research that Hill to Tarai migrant people escape Dalit laborers to the cage of a bonded colony of landlords towards free labor practice

and prosperity. Migrants do not produce only negative impacts, e.g. vulnerability, job displacement, and contrast to it, while some local people know informal economic gain and new livelihood opportunities (Stomp, 2023). An old-generation participant respondent declares that "PAHADE AAYELE TO BAHUT KUCH BHELE "means when Hill people came here many positive things happened; changes took place in favor us, and Hill people provided support to us and gave new working opportunities to survive, in contrast to native Tharu and Rajbanshi. Hill people energized, encouraged, and communicated with us; they informed us about Government facilities, schooling for children, markets, hospital and health posts, and so on. Many other things, such as non-farm work possibilities and opportunities outside the village and many more, were not shared and informed about by other native Tharu and Rajbansi in earlier times. When Hill people migrate here, the market is expanding and opportunity is flourishing. Although scholars make a wide range of pessimistic narratives about Hill migration in Tarai knowledge is missing about the positive contribution and consequences made by Hill migrant people in the host community. Migrants do not produce negative impacts like vulnerability and job displacement; in contrast it, some local people experience economic gain and new livelihood opportunities (Sitompul, 2023)

Migration is an adjustment variable of the economy. It is a matter of an individual relationship between a worker and an employer. There are different views about the implication of migration for the development of wages and employment. Migration increases flexibility and is seen as an adjustment variable in the labor market (OECD, 2003) for Tarai Dalit livelihood by the Hill migrants. Due to migration in Tarai, the livelihood source is changing after the stagnant policy of the government in the Tarai dimension into an alternative source of people's livelihood activities outside of agriculture (Chandrakishor, 2006). In response to Hill migrants, they contributed to expanding the urban sector boundary where more Dalit laborers found different job opportunities, not only for males; however, females also engaged in different informal activities. There is no possibility of job variation and equal chances for female members in the agriculture sector.

Conclusion

Migration is an alternate way of livelihood diversification for people. It has taken the place of two functions or activities together in the host community in a similar time frame. On the one hand, migrated people are seen as the manifest function of opportunity seekers, and on the other hand, they play a latent function of job opportunity constructor and giver to the host community labor, which is not appropriately acknowledged by migration scholars. Regarding this context, I used to explore the migration and livelihood diversification concept to take the next option, i.e., opportunity constructor and provider, whereas the Dalits in the study area diversify their livelihood from landlord dependency in such a way. Today, most Hill people are providing jobs for Dalits in informal economic sectors. Dalit respondents sharply argued that Hill migrants are job creators and providers rather than exploiters; Pahade or Hill landlords are better compared to Madhesi landlords

for our livelihoods earnings. The relationship between migrant and Dalit labor has been sharply harmonious and sharply interdependent.

Migrants have contributed to the development and expansion of small businesses, which are to the benefit of the local people. Many informal sector job opportunities, such as construction sectors (roads, canals, house building), are massively increasing in the Tarai community provided by Hill migrants to Tarai Dalits for livelihood diversification. Migrants support our petty trade and services in the village due to his mass population. However, a high level of females also participates in different labor work activities, which is not possible with landlord's agriculture.

In the event of Hill migration taking place in Baijanathpur, there are certain significant visible elements of socio-economic and livelihood changes observed in favor of Dalit laborers. The features of the landscape of the workplace and nature of labor participation are more diverse than before. Migrating families tend to purchase their land more than compared to non-migrant (native) families in Baijanathpur village. At the community level, it is observed slightly lower unemployment rates and higher literacy rates of Dalit laborers than before due to the support of migrants; they have more awareness than before; however, migrant families produce more job opportunities and consume more labor power in their territory. They also influence and force Dalit laborers to get education and health services. Today, most Hill people provide jobs for Dalits in informal economic sectors; however, migrants produce more economic activities that facilitate Dalit livelihoods. Dalit respondents sharply argued that Pahade is the job creators and providers rather than the exploiters, against the conventional claim, Pahade is better compared to Madhesi landlords for our livelihoods earnings. The process of labor market boundary expansion in both rural and urban sectors significantly contributed to the labor demand and consumption equally for male and female workers.

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