Abstract

Labour migration has been a phenomenon that has been studied by different scholars for the last two centuries. Classical economists regarded migration as a consequence of macro economic factors such as cycles of expansion and contraction of the economy or geographical concentration of means of production leading to urbanization. The neo-classical approaches to understanding labour migration use economic variables such as differentials in wage, income and unemployment rate. The most popular approach to the study of the phenomenon of labour migration has been the "Push-Pull" framework of analysis. However, labour migration is not merely an economic phenomenon. People, who migrate in search of employment, do not do so for economic reasons alone. There are social factors that influence migration decisions. Besides, migrant workers have to build their social capital by developing their social networks in order to survive and succeed in the place of destination. These social networks of migrant labour influence relationships in the labour markets of the place of destination. Therefore, this research is an attempt to understand the socio-economic processes involved in the phenomenon of labour migration and its influence on labour markets of the place of destination.

This study is situated in the Indian context, where uneven development in different parts of the country have resulted in movement of people from less developed regions to more developed regions. Therefore, this research is on domestic migration of labour from one State to another. Being a prosperous small State on the western coast of India, Goa has been considered an ideal setting for this research as it has been attracting a large number of migrant workers to fuel its high rate of economic growth. Finally, the study focuses on the construction labour market since the construction industry depends on large networks of contractors and sub-contractors, who employ cheap migrant labour. Besides, the construction industry attracts substantial numbers of migrant labour due to its ability to absorb all types of workers, from highly skilled professionals to unskilled casual labourers.

Being exploratory in nature, this study evolved in three stages. The first stage used mixed methodologies to study migrant construction workers in Goa. This stage revealed the crucial role played by migrant self-employed workers in the construction industry.
This led to the second stage of the study which used social network methodology to explore the networks of migrant self-employed workers in the construction labour market. From this stage of the research, it emerged that the majority of the sample of migrant self-employed workers came from Malda District of West Bengal. Therefore, in the third stage of this research, a case study of migrant workers from Malda, was undertaken to understand their relationships with their families and social networks at their place of origin.

This thesis explores the important role played by social networks of migrant labour at every stage of the journey in the construction labour market from accessing labour market information at their native place to building social capital at the place of destination. In particular, it delves deeper into the crucial role of migrant self-employed workers, who on the one hand provide cheap labour to construction companies and on the other provide gainful employment to migrant labourers. Finally, it traces the roots of a group of migrant workers from Malda, a backward district of West Bengal, and explores the networks that exist between these workers and their family members and other social contacts in Malda.

Key Words: Labour Migration, Construction Labour Market, Social Network