ABSTRACT

on

Adaptation of Migrants to the Modern Manipuri Mainstream

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by

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis is a product of an empirical based study on the contemporary issues of migration from the dimension of socio-cultural adaptation. In the contemporary Manipur, migrants are the resources as well as competitors in resource mobilisation and job market. People of Manipur have therefore got different opinions and response to issues relating to migration. On the other hand, migrants’ involvement in social interaction, integration, sense of sharing beliefs and political interests of the host society play a key role in body social. In these circumstances, the adaptation of migrants in various angles is very much important. The present thesis is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter I highlights an introduction of migration and a brief scenario of modern Manipur. Modern Manipur, referring to the post colonial period, is the home of multiple ethnic groups including early assimilated migrants, late migrants and indigenous peoples.

Manipur, having an area of 22,327 square kilometres, is divided into Hill and Valley, resided by tribal and non-tribal populations respectively. Valley shares only one-tenth of total geographical area and 59% of the total 3 million populations live in this valley area. Valley lands may be settled by any community of Indian citizen including Nepalis, tribal, Meiteis, Pangals and any migrant people. However, Hill districts are exclusively for tribal people of Manipur. Meiteis are the majority population of Manipur. During the reign of King Garib Niwas, the Meitei state was transformed into Manipur state with a new wider identity of the Manipuri encompassing the Meitei and all other communities in the State (Arunkumar, 2010). People of Manipur belong to Mongoloid race and speak Tibeto-Burman language.

The migrants in Manipur may be classified as early and late arrivals which belong to a collective description called *Mayang* means non-Manipuri outsiders. In due course, the early migrants were mixed up with later arrivals. Meanwhile, it created conflict situation with respect to identification. The migrants in Manipur are mostly Indo-Aryan speakers from Assam, Bihar, Uttar-Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, West Bengal, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Orisaa etc.
Migration is a subject matter of various inter-disciplinary sciences – anthropology, economics, political sciences etc. The impact of migration in population structure is given due importance to the demographers (Bhende & Kanitkar, 2006). While anthropologists usually have curiosity on how is migration influenced to the life ways and make changes in peoples’ socio-cultural aspects. The impacts of migration could be either or both of positive and negative results and therefore the two aspects have been noted as the introduction of the present study. In India, we may consider two problems of migration. First is the irregular immigrant from neighbouring countries to India. Second is the internal migrants and resource conflict. This is a national characteristic such as Maharashtrians and non-Maharashtrians in Maharashtra, Tripuris and non-Tripuris in Tripura, Manipuri and non-Manipuri in Manipur and so on.

Identification of the Research Problem

Migrants are transit travellers living in between two cultures governed by two meaning systems. In the eyes of post modernists, understanding a culture is an exploration of the images of the realities. To them, migrants’ behaviour is regulated by their hybrid identity as a quest to adaptation. The study has been identified by considering the migrants as liminal people by adopting the theory of liminality which stated of three stages – separation, liminality and aggregation. Of these three stages, migrants are located in the second phase which is the most important phase in the study of human adaptation in a new society.

Objectives

1. Assess migrants’ political behaviour, participation in existing issues on political order and armed conflict.
2. To evaluate the differentials in family planning attitude among migrants.
3. To measure the ‘sense of social inclusion and exclusion’ of the migrants by determining the level of integration among different generations of migrants.
Importance of the Study

The focus of the present study is entirely on migrants of Manipur, permanently translocated population, covering many generations, living with the host society of Manipur. When migrants arrive to a new host society, they live in between two cultures and compelled to adapt to the host society. Involvement of the migrants in various socio-cultural and political groups in order to familiarise the host culture has its significance in nation building processes. From the anthropological perspective, for the welfare of the migrants as well as for the host society, the stages and the ongoing process of cultural adaptation, acculturation, assimilation, and integration need to be examined.

Chapter II deals on review of relevant literature on migration and human adaptation. The literature review has been carried out on thematic lines, looking at previous theories and findings of studies on migration, migrant people and their roles and positions. One of the problems relating to migration is its definition and the definition of a host society or original society. Migration is an adjustment responding to a natural or man-made environment. The migration vehicle carries these specialized and brilliant persons to the communities or areas where their services can be used efficiently than previous places (Bogue, 1969).

Migrants require several types of internal and external socio-economic adjustment to the new place of destination. Social adaptation in literature may be viewed within the framework of normative approach. It is a system of social activities aiming at overcoming adaptive barriers in any situation (N. Wiener, 1948; T. Parsons, 1977). Adaptation through conversations between persons from different cultures is likely to require more effort than adaptation between individuals from the same culture (Gumperz & Tannen, 1979). Alejandro Portes and Alejandro Rivas (2011) pointed out that for immigrants at one spectrum; average socio-economic outcomes are driven down by the poorer educational and economic performance of children from unskilled migrant families, who are often handicapped further by an unauthorized or insecure legal status.
According to Rodman (1992), there is a little recognition within anthropology that places are more important than locales, the setting for action, and the stage on which things happen. Liminality is a concept by A. V. Gennep (1909) to define a transition status when a person enters into a new status, in the rites of passages of one’s life cycle. According to Van Gennep (1960), an extended liminal phase in the initiation rites of tribal societies is frequently marked by the physical separation of the ritual subjects from the rest of society. According to Victor Turner, liminal people or ‘threshold people’ are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned. Homi K. Bhaba (1994) opined that hybridity is sometimes associated with a sense of abuse for the mixed breeds, however, it is no more a term of abuse in the post colonial discourse since it is celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the idea of in-betweeness. Bhaba (1994, 1996) carefully observed the migrant experiences which are full of dualities, half life, partial presence, gathering the past.

Chapter III deals in methodology of the research. Methodology is concerned with the study of research methods, with the nature and quality of the data produced by various methods and the logic in inquiry behind the use of the particular method. Theoretical background of liminality concept (Gennep, 1960) has been applied in this methodology. In the light of this theory, migrants who have acquired different forms of agencies, cultural elements, and social institution in the new setting have been analytically studied from different socio-political perspectives.

**Research Questions**

The study investigates the responses of the migrants, to understand their social inclusion and participation based on research questions:

- Are they really integrated with the host culture?
- How well are they involved and integrated into the host society atmosphere?
Field Sites and People

From the state of Manipur, India, the two valley districts namely Imphal West and Imphal East have been purposively selected for the study and primary data has been collected in the month of July-December, 2014, from certain selected sites. The study has been carried out at four sites namely Telipati, Babupara, Pangei, and Mantripukhri. These four sites are purposefully selected on the basis of the availability of the migrants. Telipati is predominantly resides by the Telis, Babupara by Bengalis, Pangei by Nepalis (Gorkhas) and Mantripukhri by Bengalis, Sahus, Nepalis and many other migrant communities.

Sampling, Data, and Methods

A sample of 400 individuals was interviewed during the month of July to December in 2014. Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed. Sample size was determined by using Finite population correction factor formula, worked out from the equation developed by Cochran (1977). The sample size is adjusted by the finite population correction to get the necessary sample size. The sampling frame is created by using the electoral roll recently published in 2014. Sample households are selected by simple random sampling and any one representative who is a responsible adult, over 18 years of age, from each household was interviewed.

Tabulation, Chi square test is calculated by using SPSS. Integration index is calculated by using seven parameters. The level of integration is being computed from the above 7 indicative questions based on point scale. Participation or engagement in host society’s ritual ceremonies, acceptance to inter-marriage, social gatherings, festivals are taken as indicators for the integration index.

Chapter IV is a brief account of the migrants in Manipur inclusive of early and late arrivals. In the early historical period, the Indian colonists produced to the east and south east by land route through eastern Bengal, Manipur and Assam. The Aryan in their journey to spread religion and culture to the Far East, some Aryan elements
continued to settle in these transit regions that formed a new ethnic identity. The migration history of Manipur may be classified as before and after the arrival of the British or as early arrival and later arrival. This chapter highlights the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. It also notes briefly of migration issues and the host reaction towards the trend of migration and their involvement in socio-economic lives in Manipur.

Host reaction towards migration may be dated back to the abrupt population growth during 1970s and 1980s. Soon after India got independence, Manipur was appended to India. In an analogy, population arrived to Manipur were once covered by Foreigners’ Act and treated as foreigners. In this sense, either the British or Bengali or Bhojpuris or Nepalis are belonging to the same description of Mayang or outsiders. When Manipur Constitution Act, 1947 was abolished in 1949 (Sadasvian, 2005), the Foreigners’ Act was revoked by default. However, people’s understanding to those foreigners could not be instantly removed and thus continued. At different intervals, there are social upheavals sprouted in different community based organisation for the protection of the original people of Manipur. The All Manipur Students’ Union (AMSU) born in 1965 had played a remarkable role in this regard.

It was found that in Manipur, based on 1971 census, the decadal growth of India was 19 per thousand while it was 37.53 for Manipur. In the year 1980, dated 10th March, the AMSU submitted a memorandum consisting of 18 demands out of which the re-introduction of Inner Line Permit System to check foreigners was one of them. (Ningthoukhongjam, 2007). The recent movement spearheaded by Joint Committee on Inner Line Permit System (JCILPS) in 2015 on foreigners’ issue, to check migration is an important movement. The JCILPS joining hands with various students’ wings, Local Clubs, Meira Paibis (Local Women Association) demanded for Inner Line Permit System (ILPS) and organised mass rallies, sit in protest, general strikes, hunger strikes, road blockade etc. During the agitation, a student named Robinhood was killed on 8th July, 2015, near Telipati, Manipur. The state government along with JCILPS, agreement was made to pass the bill after two months long protest.
The movements rose up by the JCILP after signing agreement with the state government, the bill for ILPS was passed in the Legislative Assembly. It was immediately reacted to Kuki tribes and the Kukis of Churachandpur district instantly started civil disobedience agitations, and during confrontation, nine protestors had lost their lives. At the same time, The All Manipur Gorkha Students Union, The All Manipur Barbears’ Association also protested against the bill. As a result, the bill for ILPS passed by State Assembly has been rejected by the President of India.

Chapter V has given an empirical overview of migrants’ adaptation. Adaptation is one dimension which can be observed from two directions - biological and cultural perspectives. It is very important to recollect the theoretical paradigm on how does culture work on a particular environment. J. Russell Smith (Herskovits, 1925) quoted, ‘To understand what man has wrought, we must study the place, the environment, in which he has wrought.’ Quite a long period of time, people of Manipur witnessed a range of undocumented population influx. Civil Society Organisations have strongly put forwarded voices for the threat percept in the recent days.

Attitude of the Migrants to Family Planning Measures has been considered important in the study of adaptation and migration. Family planning (FP) is a comprehensive term coupled with different integrated components such as family size, sexual and reproductive health, contraceptives and related health issues etc. Family planning attitudes are usually seen as the consequences of social interaction. About 16 percent among Bhojpuris felt unfavourable attitude on family planning and among Bengali it is 8 percent. For a smooth comparison, FP index is computed based on 5 indicators.

Integration to Manipuri Society

The Bhojpuri in Telipati dominated by the Teli caste has adapted to the soil of Manipur. During the interaction, it is also known that they are not entirely isolated from those cultural practices of Manipuri Hindus. They never remained unattended in peculiar way of celebrating ‘Yaoshang Festival’ by the Meitei Manipuris. They participate in ‘Thabal Chongba’ dance, the practice of ‘Nakatheng’ etc. which are the
unique elements of Manipuri Holi festival. The integration score being calculated, the average was 22.9 with a standard deviation of 4.9. Low level integration among the first generation is represented by 60 percent while low level among the subsequent generation migrants is only 28.5 percent. By looking the overall picture of the level of integration, 38 percent are having low level integration, 43 have moderate and 20 percent have efficient level of integration.

**Political Behaviours – Participation and Interest**

Among the migrants, half of them simply go for vote, active participation involving in public meeting and campaign was observed primarily among the second or more generation who have been staying at Manipur since birth. One fifth of them stated that they hardly or never participate due to lack of interest or due to disfranchisement. Meanwhile, in other words, by taking part in political activities individuals can express their preference of the political system and interest to political integration per se.

**Host Fear of Disintegration**

Since 1950s, several political upheavals towards the threat to the territorial integrity of Manipur were taken place. The All Manipur Student Union appeared in 1965 and put up voices about apprehension on population influx into the state. The host anxiety towards the territorial integrity is attributable to one tragedy historical event –gave away the Kabow Valley of Manipur to Myanmar. At present, through Indo-Naga peace talk, the NSCN (IM), has claimed the integration of Naga inhabited areas and has threatened the territorial boundary of Manipur. Opinions of the migrant people are gathered and analysed in this issue.

**Host Fear of Unjust Dead**

For several decades, Manipur is having a series of political conflicts. This is due to lack of usual political and ethical standards. Armed Forces Special Powers Acts, (AFSPA) 1958, are Acts of Indian Parliament and is a contemporary challenge on
human right of Manipur since many innocent lives have been killed, victimised due to this Act. AFSPA since its implementation in Manipur, 1980, she has witnessed a series of unsolved massacres such as Heirangoithong massacre (1984), Tera Bazar massacre (1993), RMC massacre etc (Kulabidhu, 2006). The Malom Massacre, in 2000 is one of the bloodshed incidents resulting to killing of 10 civilians. Malom massacre prompted Irom Sharmila to begin her fast unto death that lasted till 2016. This Act encourages a number of fake encounters.

Opinions on AFSPA, of the communities under study are gathered to know their involvement in host political aspiration as well as to know an overall political pulse of the respondents vis-a-vis the host mainstream political pulse. As a part of political inclusion and participation, opinions about nationalism – the Need of Manipur has been collected from the migrants. The migrants and the host society will lead a harmonious life depending on how much of the Nepali or Teli stands in their mindsets as Manipuri Nepali or Manipuri Teli. One Nepali from the Pangei area says - Manipur is his motherland, which is definitely a good sign of nationalism.

Chapter VI is a summary and conclusion of this research study. The migrants behave in the tune of two meaning system, one is in the tune of their origin culture and secondly, in the tune of the host culture. The migrants, while creating new homes in the new milieu, they have been exposed to form a synthetic culture by using the two meaning system. This study also has found out that the migrants have a unique behaviour of thought, action and attitudes towards their adaptation into Manipuri society. Migrants also have their unique thoughts and actions which correspond to their patterns of culture. On the other side, the host society feels xenophobia, resource conflicts, fear of competition, cultural interruption relating to norms, values.

General opinion on adoption of family planning method reveals that more than half of them think everyone should adopt family planning methods to enjoy a quality life and to improve standard of living. A few section contended that some families need higher fertility and prefer bigger family size. Use or intention to use family planning method is very much uncertain to many respondents. They felt it is very much related with
their earnings, resources and economic capability. The people of Manipur have felt xenophobic due to uncontrolled influx of population and the state becomes a conflicting zone due to limited resources. In another perspective, there is also saying that – If you want your works, either unskilled or semi skilled, to be done on time, punctually, it is better to hire the Mayang people who hardly seeks excuses in doing works’.

The subsequent generation migrants have been staying in the state for long years and claimed that their contribution in building Manipuri nationalism is unavoidable. The migrants’ have adapted in several rituals and unique elements of various festivals and ceremonies of the Meitei society such as Holi festivals, Ratha-yatra, Cheiraoba etc. They claimed that Manipur is their motherland and they have no other place to go. For example, the participation of the Telis in Nakatheng, Thabal Chongba dance which are the unique elements of Manipuri Holi festival is of immense significance.

In this study, there are two different kinds of thought, by corresponding with the concept of Robert Redfield (1956) who was the champion of ‘Little and Great Tradition’ model. Firstly, when they look at themselves in the small context of Manipur only, they consider themselves as a little community. By taking whole India, they are not marginal or liminal, they are majority people from big states, and they possessed a greater tradition.

The level of integration or involvement to the host society is quite gender specific where men play better. Religious ideology is also an important concern to the migrants/Mayang of Manipur in connection with various socio-economic activities. These migrants are integrating with Meitei caste society under the Hinduism umbrella despite several political issues. The political issues and unrest in Manipur could be due to lack of worthy political machineries. Collectivism in political participation of the migrants is quite determining factor in politics showing their inclusion and participation. Even though they are not very active in major election, participation in local election is highly noticeable.