MIGRANT LABOUR IN BRICK-KILNS–A CASE STUDY
HARYANA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Human beings are constantly on move. Migration in the present contexts in studied as the phenomena of the flow of people over shorter or longer destinations either for temporary or permanent settlement. Labour migration may be defined as a form of labour mobility towards districts or states or outside where work in available. In the absence of a detailed study on brick kiln migrant labour in Haryana. The present work is an attempt to understand the vital streams of migration, the socio-economic conditions of the migrant labour, the plight of the persisting problems being faced by the migrant labour. The nature of hiring, working conditions, indebtedness, forced labour etc. were analysed keeping in mind the underlying reasons of migration and it socio-economic sequel.

In order to fill in the gaps between the various issues raised by the scholars, the present study was undertaken. The present study is by and large, an exploratory one, whereby an attempt has been made to understand and raise certain issues regarding the brick kiln migrant Labour, which may help investigation in depth, the socio-economic conditions of the respondents in the developing rural economy in Haryana. The study employed interpretive methodology for this study. This method helped in understanding the phenomena with its underlying values and meanings. The study realized on both qualitative as well as quantitative techniques for data collection. For gathering the quantitative data we used the interview scheduled method and for the qualitative data the case study method was employed.

For the present study multi-stage stratified random sampling was employed. As a first step, we considered the significance of concentration of the brick-kilns in the districts of Haryana. The total 2681 brick kilns are functioning in Haryana -2012. From all the 21 districts, two districts were selected; one was having the highest number of brick-kilns and the other district occupying the second rank in the number of brick-kilns. At this stage
Jhajjar and Sonipat were selected. While selecting villages from the two districts all the villages of the districts individually were ranked on the basis of registered number of brick-kilns with the district small scale industries department, Government of Haryana. The two villages namely Dulhera and Goyala Kalan from Jhajjar district and two villages namely Khanda and Kheri Dahiya from Sonepat district were selected for the present study.

The incidence of indebtedness was observed to be playing significant role in the employment of the family labour. During the field work it was observed that the contractor gives advance money to the labour. By lending the money the contactors hire the labour on his own terms. The process of hiring the labour in the brick kiln by the contactors advancing the payment of wages in majority of cases was prevalent in the two studied districts of Haryana. It is the first step taken by the contractors for hiring and also few keeping their bargaining power checked.

It was observed that due to the parental debt many children are forced to work under very harsh conditions to help their families. Their children were forced to work to pay off their parents’ debt. Another observation made at the brick kiln site was that there children were forced to work to maximize the income of the head of the family. Intensive field work enabled us to find out that for name sake. Their children were shown to be getting education in the brick kiln schools but in reality they were working as “forced labour” in order to supplement their parents’ income.

During the field work children were often found knee deep in mud, water, clay, straw, ash and coal dust, kneading the brick mix. These children were also have to mold the bricks, carry them to the baking center, and then let them dry under the Sun. Further it was observed that these migrant labours do not have any documentation; no identity cards. Social security cards, medical benefits or ant benefit enjoyed with the permanent employer.

In conclusion, it has been established that the children of the brick kiln labourers sacrifice a lot to work in the brick kilns. They do not receive proper education. They are subjected to unhealthy working conditions, and are exposed to abuse and lack of care by the owners. These children have to live in small brick shacks with their entire family and work at the kilns to repay their family loan.