

Remittances and Socio-Cultural Impact on Migrant Labourers: The Case Study of Amritsar

Jaideep Singh Dillon

Associate Professor, Department of Geography S.G.A.D Govt. College, Taran Taran Punjab 143401

Abstract- In this research paper an attempt has been made to study the impact of migration in relation to economic and socio-cultural aspects. In this attempt it was found that majority of the migrants were sending their earning in terms of kind and remittances to their families at the place of origin. These migrants found the improvement in their personal financial level and their families back at home. It is remarkable to note that although, the migrants belong to different religion, language and cultural background found it comfortable for the ultimate assimilation with the new societal set up. They found no discrimination and acceptance of the locals was appreciated.

Index Terms- Remittance, sending, Utilization, Socio-cultural impact, Frequency

I. INTRODUCTION

Although migration is emerging as an important phenomenon from economic, political and public health point of views (Bhagat 2008), yet the migration research finds low priority amongst Indian Demographers. This is partly because, since the early 1990s with a paradigm shift in the demographic research tilting to the issues of reproductive health, the interest in migration research in general and internal migration in particular has dwindled considerably among Indian demographers (Bhagat 2008). On the other hand, the quantum of data available in Indian censuses on migrants is grossly neglected by the Indian demographers who are busy with data collection exercises funded by external agencies (Bose 2003).

Thus, this paper is a small step towards micro level migration research that tries to study the remittances from the place of destination to origin in kind as well as in currency, describes as how it is managed and explains how these are typically used by the recipients, and in addition to that the paper also examines socio-cultural impact on migrant labor.

II. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In order to fulfill the above objective, the study has been carried out by collecting the primary data from 500 male migrants from other States of the country in Amritsar city.

III. SAMPLING DESIGN

There are a total number of 65 wards in Municipal Corporation of Amritsar. After conducting the extensive field visit throughout the city and covering all the wards, a minimum

of ten wards were selected where there was high concentration of selected immigrants i.e., after 2001. Every effort was made to select those ten wards with maximum socio-economic and occupational heterogeneity of the migrants'. Then, in each of these wards, migrant pockets and clusters were identified. On an average 50 migrants were randomly picked up from each ward and interviewed.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most direct impact of migration is remittances. Migration is a decision that impacts the welfare of the personal household, the home community at origin, and in the end the whole economy in various ways.

A. Remitting in kind

The Remittances in kind lead to cultural diffusion of the place of origin and destination. Table 1 show that clothes and domestic (food items and cosmetic) necessities were remitted in kind. The clothes include the fresh purchases as well the given by the locals. The clothes generally given by the locals include the Punjabi dresses for ladies and Western clothes worn by the gents.

Table 1: Percentage of distribution of Remittance in kind.

Items	Percentage
Clothes	54.6
Cosmetics	20.0
Food items	15.2
Others	10.2
Total	100

Thus, the clothing, the migrants move with to the original place carries the social effects of the place of migration. As most of the migrants belong to the Hindi belt area, their traditional dress is sari for the women and dhoti for the males and this trend influence the dress culture at the place of origin over a span of period.

The food items generally include the cooking oil, confectionary and soft drinks. These are the items which are either not available in their villages or are of not good quality which they are getting at the place of destination. While in the cosmetics, the soap is the main item. As they consider it to be of superior quality than what they are getting at the place of origin. These products, the migrants either send through their friends /

relatives or carry along with them when they travel themselves to the place of origin.

B. Size of remittance

Round 64% migrants were remitting up to rupees one thousand. A sizeable percentage remits one thousand to five thousand every month. Yet, although a small percentage of 11.4% were remitting more than rupees 5000 every month. Their remittances generally relates to their monthly earning at the place of migration.

Table: 2 Percentage of distribution of Size of Remittance per month.

Amount in Rs.	Percentage
Up to 1000	64.1
1000-5000	24.5
5000+	11.4

C. Frequency of sending the remittances

The migrants whose families were entirely dependent on their remittances were sending the money regularly i.e., on monthly basis (56%). Those at origin who do not need respondents money immediately, the remittances were quarterly (18%) or on need

Table 3: Percentage of distribution of frequency of sending the remittances.

Time period	Percentage
Monthly	56.9
Quarterly	18.2
Yearly	2.8
Need basis	21.6
Never	0.4

Basis (21%). Those not sending any remittance were not having any dependent at the place of origin.

D. Interval in sending the remittance after first arrival

About 62.2% of the respondents remit their wages within one or two months of arrival. It seems that the requirement of resources at homes was urgent. Most of the migrants in the study sample have to repay the loan taken for their living at the place of origin. Others (39%) send it later according to the requirements.

Table 4: Percentage of distribution of interval in sending the remittance.

Months	Percentage
1	35.5
2	27.0
3	18.2
4+	19.3

E. Method of sending remittances

Generally, the migrants send their earnings through bank or carry it home when they get the opportunity to visit their families.

Table 5: Percentage of distribution of method of sending remittances.

Method sending of	Percentage
Bank	60.6
Self	21.2
Friends	6.1
Others	12.1

The migrants who do not have their own accounts at the place of origin utilize the accounts of their friends or relatives for the transfer of money. About 18.2 percent were forced to rely on informal networks, for example, friends and relatives visiting home or else send money through the post office by money order, which is often expensive and less preferable.

Most of the migrants were not facing problem in sending the remittances. But few of them reported the problem of snatching or being cheated by the co-passengers while travelling to their place of origin. Few of the migrants revealed that they were given some sedative along with the food items and all of their belongings were taken away. One of the respondents who got cheated was made unconscious with some powdery material and the money was taken away while travelling to his place of origin and was thrown out of the train.

F. Recipients at origin

Major portion of the migrants were sending their earning to the parents (66.7%),

Table: 6 : Percentage of distribution of member receiving money at the place of origin

Person	Percentage
Parent	66.7
Wife	26.9
Brother	2.7
Relatives	1.8
Others	1.9

Since they are unmarried and the entire family back home is looked after by the parents. Even if they are married, their wives and children are residing with the parents 26.9 percent were sending to wives because they were separated from the main family or living independently.

G. Utilization of remittances

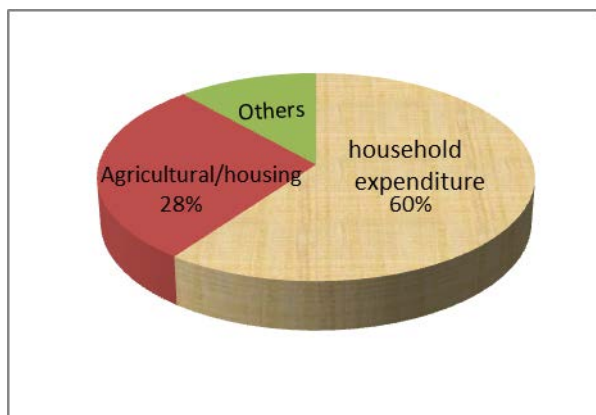


FIGURE 1: Percentage of distribution of use of remittances.

A large section of the migrants use their remittances on the maintenance and upbringing of their families back home (60%) for food, health, clothing, primary education, basic household amenities, paying off debts and so on. Further, a reasonable percentage i.e. (28.4%) were investing their money on activities such as agriculture and housing.

H. Use of remittance for Community Development

It is a healthy sign that these migrants with meager earnings still use it for the development of social and religious activities like the maintenance of school buildings (15%) and offering in the temples on the occasions of festivals (83.8%).

Table7: Percentage of distribution use of remittance for Community Development

Remittance for community development	Percentage
Religious Functions	83.8
Maintenance of Schools	15.0

I. Socio-Cultural impact of migration

Amritsar is a metropolitan city and majority of the people wear Western dress. The same trend could be seen among the migrants as majority of them prefer to wear Western Dresses (86.0%). This could be, that the locals of Amritsar of their level have also adopted Western dress. They have discarded their traditional dress after reaching at Amritsar.

Regarding the language, majority of them like to communicate in Hindi as they mention that there is great similarity in Punjabi and Hindi languages. Further, as the period of stay increases the migrants start making use of Punjabi words in their daily conversation. In fact, the respondents have observed that it's the locals who try to speak with them in Hindi.

Table 8: Percentage distribution of respondents by Socio-cultural impact at Amritsar

Variables	Percentage
Type of dress worn	
Local(destination)	12.5
Traditional (origin)	1.6
Western	86.0
Language use to communicate with locals	
Punjabi	3.8
Hindi	90.7
Both	5.5
Participation in the festivals	
Diwali	80.8
Holi	74.4
Lohri	56.2
Basakhi	55.4
Dushehra	77.9
Visiting Sikh shrine	32.0
Change in physical appearance	8.1
Marrying locals	14.2

The participation of migrants in the festivals was significantly high (80%). In case of celebration of common festivals, the migrants were participating in Diwali (80%), Holi (74%) and Dussahara (77%) but when it comes to the local festivals their participation is less, i.e. Lohari (56%) and Baisakhi (55%).

With regard to visiting the religious places, about 32% were visiting Sikh shrines. As Amritsar is having a world famous Sikh religious temple i.e. Golden Temple, That must have encouraged these migrants to visit the Sikh Shrine.

The eating habits of the migrants at Amritsar have undergone complete change at Amritsar. Higher proportions of the respondents have adopted the local food items (94.5%). In the area of place of origin, not many vegetables were used to be grown and there, these migrants use to eat other cereals like rice and bajra with some ingredients. But after reaching Amritsar they develop the habit of eating wheat, rice and more of vegetables along with pulses of their choice.

Most of the migrant lab ours have formed groups depending on their strength and divided the duties of preparing food as per their liking. Those who were staying with the families were preparing at home and the others who were living alone have arranged it according to the dishes of their choice from the market which are available at the reasonable rate.

When it comes to marriages, the migrants are very much orthodox as they prefer to have groom or bride from their native place (85.8%). Most of the unmarried young migrant would like to get partner from the areas of the origin and that too, to be arranged by their parents. It could also be arranged from the migrants family already settled at Amritsar. There is hardly any opportunity to get the partner at Amritsar from amongst the local population because of the social and cultural gap. They also follow the system of selection of the partners arranged by the elders during their childhood.

Further about 8% of the migrants have made changes in their physical appearances after migration. Most of migrants have grown beard (90%) and have started wearing turban. Some percentages of migrants at Amritsar have adopted the local physical appearance for easy acceptance for the business community and society. Most of them, when they go back to the place of origin they again change their appearance according to the place of origin.

V. CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it is clear that the migration is a well-planned strategy of the migrants to improve upon their economic and social status .Very often, all families resources are pooled to send one or more promising junior members of the family with the hope that as soon as the person gets a job in some metropolitan city, he will start sending money regularly back home as well as help others to migrate. Migration is thus always under the moral obligation to start sending the money as early as possible. It was found that migrants were sending remittances not only to the families but they were sending money to the village for developmental activities. Apart from the remittances, the focus of this paper is on effects of migration on (transnational) identity, cultural change and social structure .The analysis in this regard indicates that the migrants are getting assimilated to the socio-cultural conditions prevalent at destination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Gopal Krishna Panda and to hundreds of my respondents who kept on sitting patiently through the long interviews.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bhagat R.B (2008), "Assessing the Measurement of Internal Migration in India", Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, Vol.17, No.1, Pp91-102.
- [2] Bose. A (2003), "Population Research Deteriorating Scholarship" Economic And Political Weekly, Vol 38, No.44 (November 1, 2003), Pp4637-4639.

AUTHORS

First Author – Jaideep Singh Dillon, Associate Professor,
Department of Geography S.G.A.D Govt. College
Taran Taran Punjab 143401, Email jaspal888@yahoo.com