

Migrants in Urban Informal Sector: Case Study of Five Class-I Towns and Five Villages in Orissa

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The present study makes an attempt to find the linkage between rural-to-urban migration and urban informal sector in five class-I towns of Orissa. Using the mixed sampling method, the study finds that rural-to-urban migrants constitute the major share of the urban informal sector workers. Unlike Todaro hypotheses, the study finds that push factors rather than pull factors and higher current money income against expected lifetime income play greater role in migration decision. Furthermore, the contention that only the poorest of the poor in rural areas migrate to urban informal sector is not found to be true.

There are various disciplinary approaches, viz., Sociology, Economics, Geography etc., to explain how migration decisions are made. For understanding migration and development, four important models such as: (i) neo-classical model; (ii) labour surplus model; (iii) plantation model and (iv) rural development model, are usually discussed. It is realised from these models that certain pattern of migration should emerge in specific kinds of socio-economic context (Oberai, 1987; Simmons, 1984).

There are also some specific theories to explain migration. Ravenstein, in the 1880s, first proposed his laws of migration, which states that migrants move from areas of low opportunities to areas of high opportunities. Building on Ravenstein's law, Lee (1966) divided the forces exerting an influence on migration perceptions into "push" and "pull" factors. The movement of workers from subsistence sector to capitalist sector is vividly explained by Lewis (1954) and is further elaborated by Fei and Ranis (1961). Sjaastad (1962) advanced a theory of migration, which treats the decision to migrate as an investment decision involving an individual's expected cost and returns over time. Todaro (1969) recognised a dichotomy in an urban economy and regarded migration as two-stage phenomenon. By incorporating informal sector into standard expected income Todaro type migration model, Stark (1982) postulates a two-pronged planning horizon that rural-to-urban migrants may consider either of the two competing strategies: (i) join the informal sector in the first period and while there, seek formal sector employment and if formal sector employment is not secured, in the second period, informal sector employment is sought; (ii) search intensively (full time) for a formal sector opening in the first period and if formal sector employment is not secured, in the second period, an attempt is made to join the informal sector.

There are various bio-polar distinctions of migration (Samal, 1984; Simmons, 1984). However, more research and discussions are going on rural-to-urban migration in connection with urban informal sector, which has drawn the attention of economists and sociologists.

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