

OUT-MIGRATION AND THE CYCLE OF EXCLUSION: A STUDY ON CONSTRUCTION WORKERS FAMILIES IN BOLANGIR, ODISHA

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Abstract

Odisha is regarded as the key state for supply of out-migration. According to the census survey report of 2001, migrant people constitute 30 % with 307 million of the total population in India. Out of that 307 million people, 10.8 million are from Odisha. In Bolangir district of Odisha, people migrate frequently to the cities for getting better employment and also because of failure in farming, underemployment, and unemployment. As a construction laborer, they have to migrate because they don't get work in their place of origin. These people of Odisha are especially migrating to the cities of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and other places especially for brick-making and other labor works too. They work on contract basis and they have been given certain targets for each day. They are bound to achieve the target. In this process of migration, a child becomes the major sufferer as he has his whole life to live. The child begins his childhood as a laborer and further suffers by becoming a laborer because of lack of proper education and poor environment.

This paper begins with a discussion on out-migration in Bolangir tracing its roots from both push and pull factor of migration. Next, it examines the condition of children and family at the place of destination as well as at the place of origin. Finally, it will discuss about how migration in Bolangir has negative impact on the education of the children and hence produce the cycle of

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exclusion. Based on those analysis, some remedies have been suggested to break the cycle of exclusion.

Here an attempt has been made to achieve these objectives with the help of data from secondary sources, besides empirical data collected during the year 2006-08 through canvassing questionnaires on a sample of households in the Khaneichappar village of Khaprakhol district of Odisha representing the population of the poor migrants.

Keywords: Out-migration; Social Exclusion; Construction workers; Drop-out children.

1. Introduction (10pt)

Migration is one of the important features of human society ranging from primitive to the present modern or post- modern. Ever since the early human civilizations started marching towards the path of development the phenomenon of migration has assumed a prominent place among human beings. The nature of migration has dramatically changed after the industrialization process. With the advent of liberalization, the unprecedented rate of growth and development have been witnessing in India, since 1990s (Yadav 2012 para. 2). It also paved the way to the growth of informal sectors, especially daily wage laborers in the construction industry in urban and industrial social settings. On the other side, the failure of agricultural production and crisis stimulated the phenomenon of out- migration in search of better employment opportunities that are evidenced from several studies. Migration is a complex process. It is the result of both push and pull factor. Migration is seasonal in nature in the rural areas of western Orissa. In other word we can say that migration is the result of deprivation and exclusion from the employment opportunity in the place of origin. Out migration brings a source of employment for these people. On the other hand exploitative nature of terms and condition, hazardous worksites make their situation more vulnerable. As there is no alternative for these people, they go for out- migration. Some of the government interventions help them but it is merging. This out- migration further create exclusion for their family. It has adversely affected the formal education of their children in various ways as the whole family members are migrating to the nearby states for seeking employment opportunities in the informal sectors to eke out their livelihood.

It seeks to understand the dynamic nature of migration and its subsequent factors leading to out-migration. It would analyze these factors in the light of deprivation made to the family and also study the massive drop-outs among the children of out-migrants in Odisha.

Here an attempt is to make to achieve the objectives with the help of data from secondary sources, besides empirical data collected during the year 2006-08 through canvassing questionnaires on a sample of households in the Khaneichappar village of Khaprakhol district of Odisha representing the population of the poor migrants.

In Bolangir District of Odisha, people migrate frequently to the cities for getting better employment and also because of failure in farming, underemployment, and also unemployment. As a construction laborer, they have to migrate as they don't get work in a particular place. These people of Odisha are especially migrating to Andhra Pradesh for brick-making. They work on contract basis and they have been given certain targets for each day. They are bound to achieve the target. This target is 1000 bricks per day and the persons who are making more than the target will be getting bonus amount from the owner. This incentives work for the craze to work more and to have better income. In order to have better income these people enroll their family to work together. In this order of migration a child becomes the major sufferer as he has his whole life to live. The child begins his childhood as a laborer and further becomes the victim of deprivation as he could not have his proper education.

Children are the main sufferer both in the place of destination and in the place of origin. A child education hampers a lot. If children migrate to city along with their parents then they has to drop their school and if children remain in their hometown and their parents migrate then they has to look after their house which cause for the absentee. In both the cases children lose their education. Henceforth the cycle for exclusion continues unabated.

According to Patnaik (2007), during 1980s to 1990s, India crop growth have reduced, rural employment growth has dropped which further caused to the rising farm debts and resulted in the loss of assets of the poor rural farmers. The construction worker families are affected by the new economic policies and to address migration, policies such as agrarian policies, industrial policies

and all other policies need to be checked (Bajaj 2008). India's transition shows that the poor urban migrants who do not have identity papers are forced to rely on the black money. Here out-migration and exclusion go hand in hand. Deshingkar and Start (2003) in their working paper 220 has highlighted the issue of seasonal migration for livelihood in India, which shows the process of migration without getting opportunity in their hometown and exploring opportunities in other places but fails because of poor government policies for the migrants. Out migration is the reason because of the lack of employment in the place of origin. In search for employment these poor farmers go to different places but there they cannot be accommodated and are bound to lead a poor migrant life. These migrants suffers because of the state's absence in service delivery and also because of lack of institutional support where they work (Mann, 2012 July 31). Children in the construction sites do not go to school. They help their parents in construction work that causes social exclusion further. Bajaj mentioned in his study that though migration ensured two square meals a day, it did not result in nutrition security because 70 % of the women and children on the sites were malnourished. These undernourished women and children has to do hard labor in the construction sites without any support system in the city. Lack of adequate shelters, potable water, creche and sanitation affects the health of families. Children do not receive appropriate food at the regular times as required by the age group. Hence, children becomes the major victims affected by the undernourishment, uncared, without schools or drop outs of schooling in between. As these children do not have the access to education, skills and health, they find themselves in the ranks of the low productivity, low wages, and unskilled, unorganized workforce. This becomes the destiny for these children. In the recent news of the Hindu (Barik, 2016 Feb 3) flashes that the migration in the KBK region continues without any interruption. Thus, this review of literature shows that though the migration issue has been highlighted long back, it still persist into the society and the sufferers are facing the same problem. It again remind us about the cycle of exclusion that continues unabated.

2. Research Method

It is an empirical research based on the requirement of data. This field work was an integral part of our M.A course in sociology. It was held in the second week of November month and continued till one month i.e first week of December, 2007. In this study, both qualitative and quantitative approach was used and the entire planning was based on 'exploratory research

design'. Purposive sampling was used for the selection of respondents. 106 respondents were being interviewed which were the full census respondents. As the target respondents were not found in the Kanheichappar village so the respondents from the other two villages -Phuljhar and Jalpankel- were also interviewed. These respondents were found through snow-ball sampling. As per our topic is concerned, the data was collected from the migrants. The data was collected through the structured interview schedule. Apart from this I also employed observation method, group interview method and Case study method. The secondary sources of data were collected from the respective Panchayat, RI and Tashil offices, Police Station and reading materials in form of books, articles, reports, etc. in order to support idea for better analysis. The data was analyzed in the process of collecting data through guided interview schedule method. Relevant official records have also been supplemented our data for the purpose of analysis.

The research: Profile of construction workers in Bolangir

In this study the migrants hail from the underdeveloped regions of Odisha state and are mostly from the disadvantaged sections of society. This research was conducted in one of the poor regions of Odisha. In Odisha, KBK* region is the most backward area and poverty stricken belt (Meher,1999).The KBK region now consists of eight districts namely, Kalahandi; Bolangir and Sonepur forming part of undivided Bolangir; and Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada forming part of undivided Koraput. More than 90 percent of populations in this Bolangir district in the year 2008 are living below poverty line. On this basis, the BPL survey conducted in the state reveals that 79.10 percent rural families in Odisha lived under poverty and the survey reported that about 84.54 percent BPL families lived under poverty in Bolangir.

According to unofficial sources, around 20,000 people are migrating from Bolangir every year to other States in search of work. These people lack the basic condition of life. After the harvest, they leave in thousands, most often for the brick-kilns of Andhra Pradesh. They are herded together by labor contractors, and organized into meeting groups of three to five called Pathurias. There are other destinations too. Some go to the brick kilns within Orissa, where even without middlemen, conditions of work are little better than in Andhra Pradesh. Some become agricultural laborers in the areas irrigated by the Hirakud canals; others go to big cities such as

* KBK is a region in Odisha consisting of three districts named Kalahandi, Bolangir, and Korapur.

Mumbai, Surat, Varanasi, Raipur, to work in construction, in weaving, in hotels or as rickshaw and cart pullers but most of them engage in construction work. According to the demographic feature of 1991 census, Bolangir consists of about 5.74 percent of Geographical area (in Sq. Kms) where about 1707753 population live. The sex ratio is 980. Here 90.38 % rural population leaves where 17.27 % are SC and 18.55% are ST. The literacy rate of Bolangir was 39.74 and the Decadal growth rate of population (1981-91) was 16.77% {Government of Orissa (1996), Statistical Abstract of Orissa, Directorate of economics and Statistics, Bhubaneshwar}.

Out migration occurs in Bolangir district because of deprivation. Deprivation may refer to poverty. In Orissa and in some other states the system of employment of interstate migrant labor known as Dadan labor is in vogue. In Bolangir, dadan labor is recruited through contractors or agents called Sardars or Khatadars for work outside the state in large construction projects. No working hours are fixed for these workers and they have to work on all the days in a week under extremely bad working conditions.

These people of Bolangir lack the basic condition of life: they are deprived of their basic necessities and hence they go for out migration. After the harvest, as people doesn't have any other source of income, so thousands of people residing in Bolangir most often go for the Brick kilns to Andhra Pradesh. The Pathurias (an organized little group for brick kilns.) work for 12 to 15, sometimes 18 hours a day, usually from November to May. The groups are usually able to make 1000 bricks in 1 day, although occasionally they may not make more than 500. Hence they prefer to migrate along with their family in order to earn good money. The minimum wage for daily labor in Orissa is Rs.50, and in Andhra Pradesh around Rs.70. Once made, 1000 bricks will be sold at Rs.1200 or there about. Like all forms of slavery and bonded labor in history, this is a meticulously worked out system. Central to it is the dept trap. The areas chosen have been denuded of possible livelihoods for the very poor, though a land distribution process bewildering to the tribal population, the acquisition of the best land by rich landlords and big farmers, deforestation and the resultant aridity, and the fencing of the remaining forests by the government. The old people left behind by their families simply starve. For the poorest landless or marginal farmers, the short spells up to harvest time is the only period that he can eat at home.

The local Sardar appears as a blessing. He offers a loan during their vulnerable time, ranging from Rs.5000 to Rs.20000 that will be paid back by labor when the time comes. That is how the cycle begins. The Pathurias actually make all the bricks necessary to pay off the loan within a few months of their arrival at the kilns. But when the time comes for their return to hometown, the calculation shows a short fall, which they must pay back in the next season. They do bring some money back, but most of which goes in treating illness, or for food. It might also work as an incentive – a new loan to tide over a marriage perhaps. Dowry is just a decade old acquisition among many tribal communities. The cash required may go up to Rs.8000, and the wedding, in some places, might not take place without a bicycle and a radio.

In the light of the above facts, when they are migrating to other places, it becomes necessary for them to move along with their family members. Their children are also dropped out of schools during the time of the seasonal migration. In the place of destination, they are not enrolling their children in schools due to the fact that they render their help in earning income for the family along with parents. Therefore, this study aims to delve into the understanding of the structural constraints that keep the children of migrant workers away from the formal education and further these children are held in the trap of exclusion.

3. Results and Analysis

After the harvest season, the agricultural workers from the Bolangir district migrate in thousands, most often for the brick-kilns to Andhra Pradesh. They are herded together by labor contractors, and organized into meeting groups of three to five called Pathurias. There are other destinations too. Some go to the brick kilns within Orissa, where conditions of work are little better than in Andhra Pradesh without middlemen. Some become agricultural laborers in the areas irrigated by the Hirakud canals; others go to big cities such as Mumbai, Surat, Varanasi, Raipur, to work in construction, in weaving, in hotels or as rickshaw- and cart pullers but most of them engage in construction work. Many scholars have strongly argued that it is the push factor which causes migration. They point towards the high pressure of population on limited land, seasonal employment; low wages and gradual decay of traditional occupation and village industry have considerably aggravated the economic miseries of the rural masses, drought leading to migration from rural areas (Bhargava, 1971) In certain studies out migration is the result of push factors

rather than pull factor like lack of work and scarcity of agricultural land (Chakrapani & Vijay Kumari, 1992). Still some other scholars argue that push and pull factors vary with respect to type of society in which migration take place for example in traditional society it is forced where as in industrial societies it is voluntary (Shah, 2002).

However in this study both push and pull factors are playing equal roll for migration.

History of Migration in Kanheichappar Village:

It was difficult to get the actual data of migration history, but anyhow we manage to get some past events regarding migration. In the Village Kanhekhappar people started migration from their forefather around 50 years ago. These people were motivated by the Sardar. These people opt for migration because of the drought in that area that cause for the lack of basic necessity. These people of Kanhekhappar village were unable to say the actual data regarding migration that when did the migration started in the village of Kanhekhappar. Most of the migrations are of young age, there is no age boundary for migration except the children (Below 15 years of age) and old people who are unable to work. Young age groups are preferred more because they are physically strong, energetic and are capable of doing hard labour. The data regarding age of migration in the Kanhekhappar village is as follows:

TABLE.1

AGE AT MIGRATION

| Sl No. | AGE | NO | PERCENTAGE |
|--------|----------|-----|------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | 15 - 20 | 11 | 10.37 |
| 2 | 20 - 25 | 28 | 26.42 |
| 3 | 25 - 30 | 20 | 18.87 |
| 4 | 30 - 35 | 21 | 19.82 |
| 5 | 35 - 40 | 09 | 08.49 |
| 6 | 40-ABOVE | 17 | 16.03 |
| 7 | TOTAL | 106 | 100.00 |

If we see the above table then we would find that the highest percentages of migration are at the age group of 20 to 25. And next is between the age group of 30 to 35. This shows that the migrations are more between the ages 20 to 35 i.e. middle age than the younger age and older age. These people of Kanhekhappar village mostly go to Andhra Pradesh i.e. most of them are interstate migrations, sometimes they also migrate for intra-state i.e. in the places of Sambalpur, Bargarh, Hiraikud, etc. where there is offer for construction works. Sometime they had also moved to west Bengal. Mainly these people of Kanhekhappar migrate for working for Brick kilns. They are engaged in the work of digging Mud, making bricks and carrying bricks. People are migrating to Inter State. i.e. Andhra Pradesh, are generally engaged in brick kilns works. Sometimes these people also do the work of loading stones, doing machinery works. But these works are specially done when they are migrating to intra-state (within Orissa). The migrant people of Kanhekhappar village generally stay for six month i.e. from the month of November to the end of May when they are going for brick kiln work in Andhra Pradesh. And there are some cases of intra-state migration where they stay according to the time period of work of Government may be of two to four-five months.

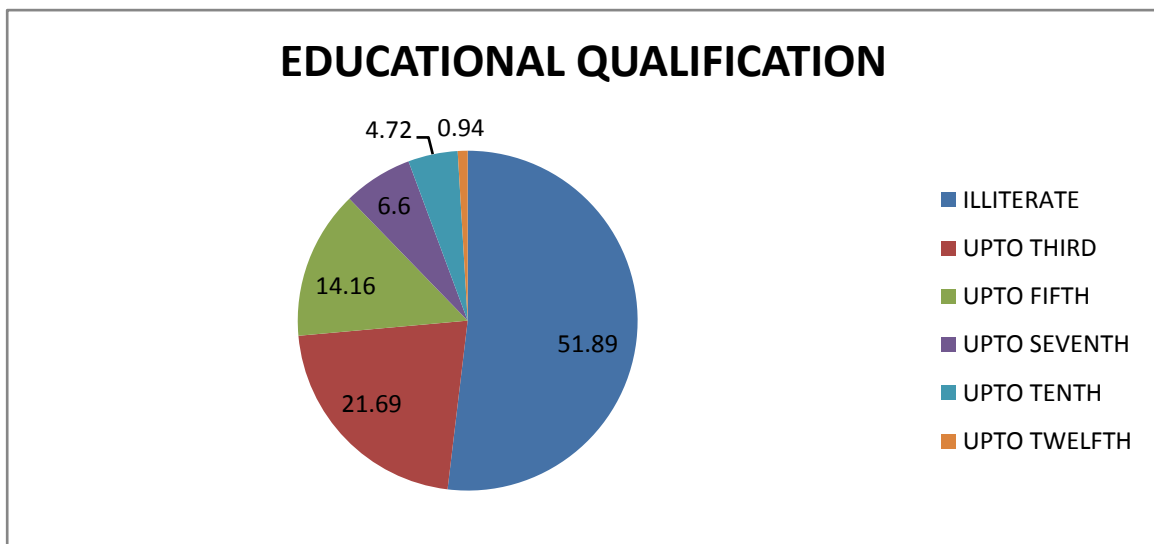
According to the data collected from Kanhekhappar village, most of these people migrate with their whole family members and families having old-aged and school going children were left behind in the village. In some case they also leave the old people to look after their houses. The motive of going with a family is to earn more money.

According to village people of the Kanhekhappar, they were motivated by the Sardars who give some incentives at the time of their need. When these villagers take that money and finish it then they were forced to migrate by the Sardar so that they can repay the amount. The incentive given by Sardar may be of Rs. 8,000/- to Rs. 17,000/-. Some time they were also motivated to migrate and earn better by their migrant relatives and village people.

These people were provided the traveling tickets, they were also provided medicals treatment if necessary and weekly allowance. These all incentives given by the owner at the place of destination motivate them to migrate and to earn money.

Generally most of the people migrate with their family but in some cases some family members are left behind because of their old age problems or for schooling or for taking care of the house and property. Mostly the left members are old mother, old father or children. According to the respondents', the main reason behind leaving the aged and children behind, is to take care of house, education of the children and unhygienic condition of the place of destination. Here are only two primary schools in the whole three villages. Only approximately twenty children are coming to school that too because of the greed for mid-day meal. Most of the children at the age of fourteen were studying in class-5 because they dropped in between during migration and rejoined the school after coming back. The secondary school is very far (fifteen kilometer) from the village so this is also another reason for further drop out. The chart below presents the educational qualification of the total respondents (migrants and their families).

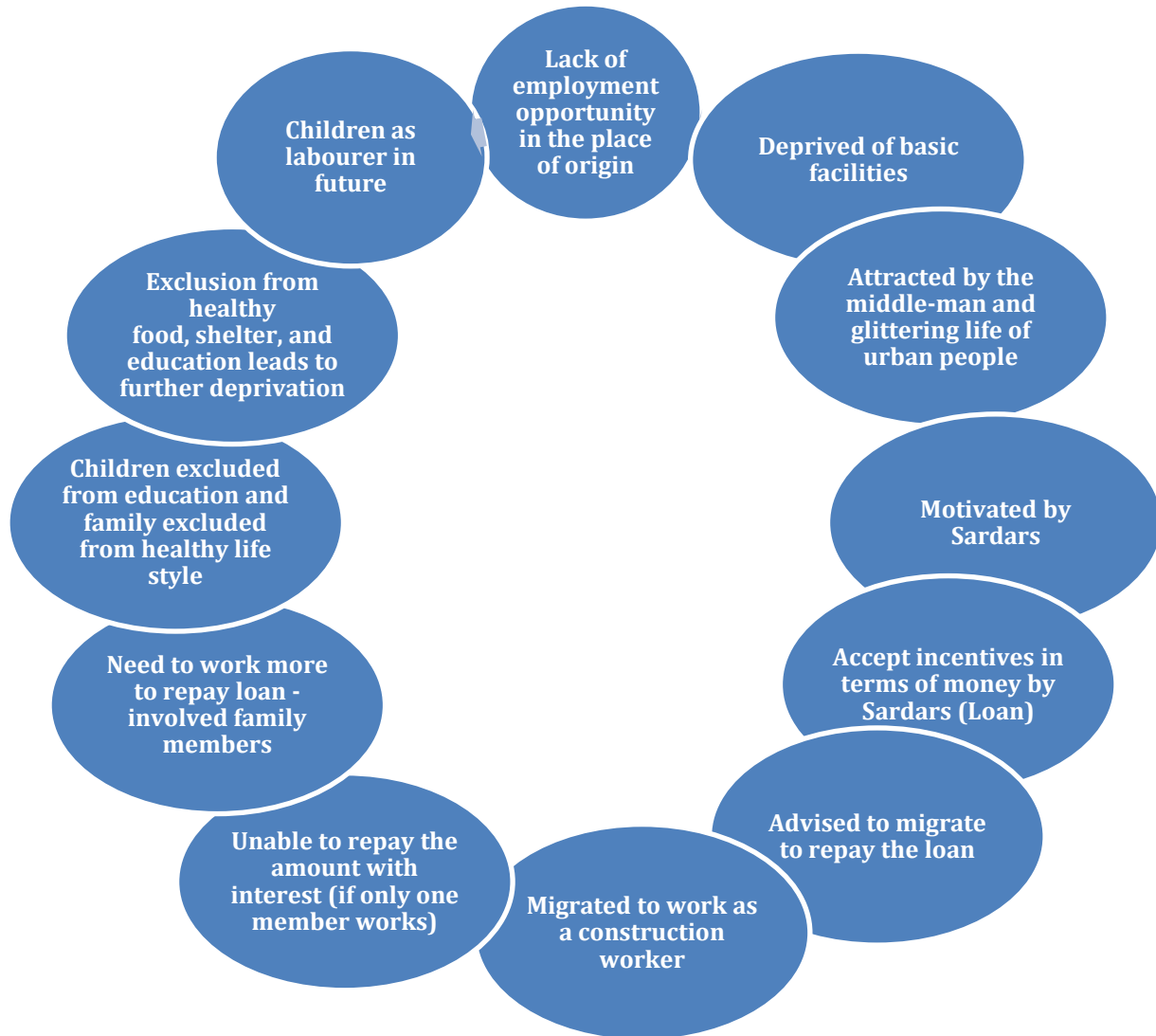
Figure-1
Educational Qualification of Migrants



This chart shows the illiteracy

and poor education level of the migrants. The overall observation and findings can reveal the truth of the migrants about their living standards and also about their future. From this analysis the cycle of exclusion can be drawn out assuming their living conditions at present and also seeing the future of the children.

Figure-2
Cycle of Exclusion



- Lack of employment opportunity in the place of origin
- Deprived of basic facilities
- Attracted by the middle-man and glittering life of urban people
- Motivated by Sardar's
- Accept incentives in terms of money by Sardar's (Loan)
- Advised to migrate to repay the loan
- Migrated to work as a construction worker

- Unable to repay the amount with interest (if only one member works)
- Need to work more to repay loan - involved family members
- Children excluded from education and family excluded from healthy life style
- Exclusion from healthy food, shelter, and education leads to further deprivation
- Children as laborer in future

This is how a deprived migrant falls into the trap of exclusion, which require serious check ups to break the cycle.

4. Conclusion

After analyzing the data, the underlying fact is that the most of the migrants are leaving out of their place of origin on account of lack of employment opportunity or either because of agricultural hardships. Their poor socio economic conditions force them to migrate. They are struggling for their livelihood. Most of the people live in a pitiable condition and don't have any other sources of earning other than agriculture. So when they find an alternative option to earn money, they tend to go to the places where they can get better wages. Hence, they migrate mostly along with their young family members including children and female members. But for children, migration cause a serious drawback in terms of the education and for women it leads to health problem because of poor nourishment. The recent constitutional amendment on compulsory education, under the Article 21A, becomes difficult for the children of construction workers to continue the formal system of education, till the age of 14. One needs to rethink of alternative educational arrangements for the children of informal sector workers who often migrate between urban and rural social settings. Otherwise, the children would face double marginalization as shown in the above chart of the cycle of exclusion. Exclusion from education, food and proper shelter will further create a life of poverty which is a serious threat to the migrants' families. They are the sufferer both in their workplace as well as in their hometown because they cannot avail the government facilities at their hometown and there is no such policy at the place of destination. Thus, the dual marginalization reinforces the same hegemonic social structures that foster inequality and discrimination. If it is not properly checked then the cycle for exclusion will continue. Henceforth, I would like to propose the theory of Common School System and Neighborhood System of Education as suggested by the All India Forum for Right to Education (AIF- RTE), which can effectively work. If there would be a compulsory common

boarding school for all and every children irrespective of their caste, creed, community, race, religion and region then migrants children will be escaped from exclusion and the cycle for social exclusion will terminate.

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