

## Rationale behind the Migration of Kanikaran tribes: Push and Pull Factors

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### ABSTRACT

*According to census 2011, the population of tribes stood at 104 million in India constituting 8.6% of the nation's total population. Of these 7 lakh tribes are in Tamil Nadu with 6 lakh in rural and a lakh in urban. The decadal change in rural-urban population of tribes are 19.8 per cent in rural and 34.2 per cent in urban. Kanyakumari district was chosen for the study since the decadal change of tribal population is very tremendous than any other district. (5.1 per cent in rural and 88.2 per cent in urban) The study was undertaken among the Kanikaran tribes of the district by selecting four highly populated tribal settlements through Proportionate Random Sampling technique. The sample for the study consisted of 100 respondents (40 from Thachamalai, 39 from Arukani, 15 from Puravilai and 6 from Vellambi malai tribal settlements). The data were collected as push and pull factors with a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule and analysed by Garrett Ranking Technique. Employment availability (72.80) took the first rank in active pull factors of migration followed by high income and working conditions (67.20). The tribal migrants placed high value on employment related factors. Threat from wild life (77.48) and lack of employment in their locality (70.52) were the active push factors reported by the tribal migrants. The other factors like declining trend in agriculture (57.08) and poverty (54.92) were also considered as crucial factors by a considerable percentage of respondents. The policy implications drawn out of the findings of the research study such as fencing of tribal settlements, encouragement of self-employment among tribes, introduction of successful agricultural technologies, implementation of forest act, 2006 and formation of migrant labour unions can be taken into consideration for limiting the distress migration of tribes and hence retain them for the betterment of traditional agriculture.*

**Keywords:** Migration, Tribes, Factors, Employment, Kanikaran.

### INTRODUCTION

In the Human Development Report of 2016, India slipped to 131<sup>st</sup> rank with 27 per cent fall in HDI due to regional disparities in education,

health and living standards within the country. (UNDP report 2017) India is a very heterogeneous society divided into so many castes and tribal communities.

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The population belonging to Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) are relatively socio-economically backward. Although the Census of 2011 enumerates the total population of Tribes at 10, 42, 81, 034 persons, constituting 8.6 per cent of the population of the country, the tribal communities in India are enormously diverse and heterogeneous. There are wide ranging diversities among them in respect of languages spoken, size of population and mode of livelihood. The number of communities that find their place in the list of the Schedule of the Indian constitution is reflective of this diversity. The Government of India, in its Draft National Tribal Policy, 2006 records 698 Scheduled Tribes in India. As per the Census of India 2011, the number of individual groups notified as Scheduled Tribes is 705.

The tribes can be distinguished into five broad regional groupings based on ecological, social, economic, administrative, and ethnic factors (although there are many overlaps) (Ministry of Tribal affairs, 2014).

**1. Himalayan Region:** It has three sub-regions: (a) North-eastern Himalayan region, (b) Central Himalayan region, and (c) North-Western Himalayan region.

**2. Middle Region:** It is constituted by the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh), where more than 55 per cent tribal people of India live.

**3. Western Region:** It includes the States of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

**4. Southern region:** It is comprised of the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.

**5. Island Region:** The Islands of Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea.

There are many differences between these regions as well as differences from tribe to tribe. For example, while the Northeast is often viewed as a singular and homogeneous entity, the region is highly diverse with over 200 tribes and sub-tribes, each of which have their own language, culture and political

structures. Further, the tribes of the Northeast differ from tribes in other parts of India, particularly in terms of their historical relationship with the colonial and Indian State. The tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, comprising 556 islands of which only a few are populated, are also distinct. The Islands are administered as a Union Territory under the Central Government and are home to some of the smallest tribes such as the Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa and the Sentinelese.

The tribes can also be differentiated on the basis of population size since communities like Gonds, Bhils, Santhals, Oraons, Minas, Mundas and so on have a population that ranges from one million to a little over seven million people. As against this, there are communities like the Andamanese Islanders and tribal groups such as the Birjia and Asur in Bihar and the Birhor of Madhya Pradesh who have a population of less than 200 persons.

Circular migration or rural-urban migration is emerging as a dominant form of migration amongst tribes in India. Tribal migrants have found jobs in factories, agro-processing plants or working as porters, domestic servants, bus cleaners, rickshaw pullers, street hawkers, petty traders, construction workers and domestic workers. Migrants are often willing to take on jobs that others cannot or do not want to do (those that are dirty, degrading and dangerous). The work is commonly poorly paid and insecure but it is very attractive to those from marginal areas where wages are too low to make a living. (Deshingkar et al., 2006). Migration can help to reduce poverty or to halt the slide into poverty. It also helps tighten rural labour markets. There are many negative impacts of migration like loss of identity, culture, security, acute shortage of labour and high dependency ratios in sending areas. Mass male migration can lead to worsening poverty. People who are away for a long time may lose access to natural resources and lose their voice in community decision-making. Migration can also have a negative effect on collective action

and natural resource management (Society of Regional Research and Analysis, 2010).

Humanitarian Foresight Think Tank (2016) report revealed that stretching or disrupting traditional patterns, population growth and intensifying weather-related disasters (drought in particular) result in increasing migratory movements, and in less people benefiting from this positive deviance behaviour.

International Organization for Migration (2016) stated that migration is often analysed in terms of the "push-pull model", which looks at the push factors, which drive people to leave their country (such as economic, social, or political problems) and the pull factors attracting them to the country of destination.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Analytical research design was used in this study to suit the objectives and type of information needed. In Diagnostic or Analytical research design, the researcher is more concerned with discovering and testing whether certain variables are associated and analyse the relationships of those variables i.e. it is more of a cause-effect relationship. Analytical research attempts to establish why it is that way or how it came to be.

Out of the 36 tribes in Tamil Nadu, there are six tribes in Kanyakumari district. Of these the Kanikaran tribe dominates three – fourth of the tribal population with 5571 Kanikkars (Source: Pechiparai Gram Panchayat office, 2015 - 2016), out of the total tribal population of around 7282. (Source: Kanyakumari district Statistical handbook – 2015). Hence, the Kanikaran or Kanikkar tribe was selected for the study of migration.

Since the demographics of Kanikaran tribes is available only in forest range – wise, tribal mother settlements in each forest range is considered as a sampling unit instead of villages. Out of the five forest ranges in Kanyakumari district, four forest ranges namely, Kulasekharam, Kaliyal, Velimalai and Azhakiyapandipuram forest ranges are inhabited by Kanikaran tribes. From each of

these four forest ranges, one tribal mother settlement with maximum population was selected for the study.

The respondents were selected by adopting proportionate random sampling technique. The sample for the study consisted of 100 respondents (40 from Thachamalai, 39 from Arukani, 15 from Puravilai and 6 from Vellambi malai tribal settlements). The data were collected with a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule.

#### Factors of Migration

Although every migrant has a different story behind his moves, there are some common factors behind it. The literature survey helps us in identifying the main factors of migration. With some exceptions the aggregated picture gives the following as the main causes of migration in form of push and pull factors.

##### Push factors

These are the conditions prevailing in the actual residing place of the migrant that forces him/ her to migrate. The push factors in the migration of tribes are listed below.

- a. Lack of employment in their locality.
- b. Poor medical care
- c. Loss of wealth
- d. Threats from wild life
- e. Less educational opportunities
- f. Declining trend in agriculture
- g. Poverty and low income
- h. Loss of tribal identity

##### Pull factors

Pull factors are the conditions prevailing in the destination place of the migrant that attracts him towards it. The common pull factors in case of tribal migration are listed below.

- a. Opportunities for education
- b. Employment availability
- c. Better medical care
- d. Safety and Security
- e. High income and working conditions
- f. Labour scarcity

Garett Ranking Technique (GRT) was used to rank the factors responsible for the migration of migrant respondents. The sample respondents were asked to rank each factors of migration based on its importance and these

ranks were converted to percent position by using the following formula.

$$\text{Percent position} = 100 (R_{ij} - 0.05) / N_i$$

$R_{ij}$  = Rank given to  $i^{\text{th}}$  attribute by  $j^{\text{th}}$  individual

$N_i$  = Number of factors ranked by  $j^{\text{th}}$  individual

By referring to the Garrett's table, the percent position estimated was converted into score. Thus, for each factor the scores of various individuals were added and the mean value was estimated. The mean scores were arranged in a descending order. The attributes with the highest mean was considered as the most important factor and others followed in order.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factor is generally considered as an agent or a force of anything that affects, determines and influences something in space and time. Such force may be favourable or unfavourable or neutral in conception of someone. So far as the matter of concepts of factors of migration are concerned, one finds that all types of factors that determine a move or migration of a person are apparently related to the Origin (the place of residence before migration or the place from where migration takes place or place of last residence) and Destination (the place of residence after migration or the place where

migration completes or also the place of new residence).

Both the origin and destination place are characterized by favourable (encouraging), unfavourable (discouraging) and neutral or indifferent (not taking part either in supporting or protesting a move in the process of migration) factors. In fact, the origin and destination have positive, negative and neutral characteristics, which are directly or indirectly related to the process of migration of a person.

### Push factors of migration

The negative or unfavourable or discouraging attributes or forces found operating at a place are called push factors which force or repel a person to move somewhere or in other words to the place where the pull factors for such person do exist. But the truth is that both the pull and push factors do exist or operate simultaneously at both the origin and distribution place of a migrant. The neutral factors do not make any contributions to the decision making process of an individual, but sometimes act in making balance in the move of someone.

The major push factors responsible for tribal migration are ranked using Garrett technique and listed in Table 1 along with their mean scores.

**Table 1: Ranking of Push factors of migration**

S. No.	Factors	Garrett score	Mean score	Rank
1.	Lack of employment in their locality	80	70.52	II
2.	Poor medical care	68	23.53	VIII
3.	Loss of wealth	59	29.47	VII
4.	Threats from wild life	53	77.48	I
5.	Less educational opportunities	47	42.08	VI
6.	Declining trend in agriculture	41	57.08	III
7.	Poverty and low income	32	54.92	IV
8.	Loss of tribal identity	21	45.92	V

The major push factors responsible for the migration of Kanikkar tribes were threats from wild life and lack of employment in their locality. After the setting up of Agasthyamalai biosphere reserve, the tribes are facing innumerable problems which often leads to man animal conflicts. There is also a general negative opinion among the tribes on

agriculture and hence they are seeking new employment avenues.

Both the push and pull factors ranking revealed the urgent need of employment opportunities for the tribes. All the other factors like health, education and culture takes the back seat in case of tribal migration.

### Pull factors of migration

The positive or favourable or encouraging attributes or characteristics of a place are called as pull factors working on the individual or in attracting the person from the place

where push factors exist. The important pull factors for tribal migration are ranked in the order of importance using Garrett ranking technique as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Ranking of Pull factors of migration**

S. No.	Factors	Garrett score	Mean score	Rank
1.	Opportunities for education	77	31.77	V
2.	Employment availability	63	72.80	I
3.	Better medical care	54	48.73	IV
4.	Safety and security	46	50.87	III
5.	High income and working conditions	37	67.20	II
6.	Labour scarcity	23	28.63	VI

It can be clearly understood from the Table 2 that most of the tribes were migrating in search of employment which may subsequently contribute to better income. The migrants opined that though their destination places possess enough labours, the demand for cheap labour is high. This demand for cheap source of labours has been met with the supply of tribal migrants as labourers. Also, there is an increasing trend of migrating for higher education among the tribes which has its roots on the literacy campaign of various NGOs. The Kanikkar tribes felt that working in forest areas is no longer safe, both for their life and family and hence tend to move towards nearer towns for safety and security.

### CONCLUSION

It was evident from the discussion with the tribal migrants that most of them are resorting to migration because of the complicated scenario prevailing in their tribal settlements. The tribal migrants, being the victims of distress migration had suggested countless interventions to be made to minimize distress migration of their people. All their suggestions are consolidated and presented below.

- Implementation of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers (Recognition of forest rights) act, 2006 with its complete spirit. This law opposed the historical injustice done to the tribes and forest dwellers and called for the transparency in conservation of forests. When this law is implemented, all the

tribes can claim ownership to the forest land they cultivate at present and legalise it in documents. With this, they can avail benefits from agriculture sector.

- Encouragement of traditional occupation of Kanikaran tribes like honey gathering, medicinal plants collection and making of tribal artefacts by various group approaches.

- Ensuring that the tribes get fair price for their products in the market by the formation of a monitoring mechanism.

- Man-animal conflict is the vital reason behind the distress migration of tribes. Intrusion of wild animals causes major threat for tribal agriculture and leads to the shifting of farming patterns in tribal settlements. This can be minimized by fencing the tribal settlements from forests.

- Another surprising fact is that most of the tribal settlements in Kanyakumari district are under town panchayat which limits the availing of government welfare schemes by the tribes. Only the tribal settlements that are under gram panchayat can look for developmental programmes like MGNREGS, IAY, etc.

Arasu Rubber Corporation Limited (ARCL) is a Government of Tamil Nadu Company functioning under the Department of Environment & Forests. The objective of the Corporation is to provide employment to the locals of Kanyakumari District and adopting the repatriates from Sri Lanka. But the ground level scenario is that most of the native tribes

are employed with ARCL as contract labourers and labours from faraway places are employed permanently. The management of ARCL must address this issue as early as possible to limit the distress migration of tribes.

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