

Loes Schenk-Sandbergen (ed). *Women and Seasonal Labour Migration.* (Indo-Dutch Studies on Development Alternatives—(16). New Delhi: Sage Publications. 1995. 345 pages. Hardback. Indian Rs 375.00. Paperback. Indian Rs 200.00.

So far migrants who are poor, and particularly the increasing number of women who migrate for survival, have not been given much attention. In the literature, women are considered to be 'tied movers'. This book has *engendered* the important issue of seasonal, survival migration. This volume, No. 16, in the series on Indo-Dutch series on Development Alternatives, consists of four studies and focuses on women who stay behind while males migrate, and on women who migrate individually or with the family. The crucial question asked is: "Is the consequence of women and men migration subordination or emancipation of women?"

In the first study, Menon examines the impact of tribal male migration on women either staying behind or migrating with them. Women from three tribes in Orissa are surveyed. The tribes are: Saora, Santhal, and Munda. While Saora women stay behind and the men migrate, the Santhal and Munda households move to work in the National Aluminium Company Complex and live in the nearby slum areas. The destruction of forests and the natural environment has forced men to migrate as they can not fulfil their traditional role of being hunters and fighters. The Saora women, who were in control of agriculture before, have also seen their productive role in agriculture decline. Therefore, men migrate and women stay behind. As a result, the Saora women have almost lost their prominent economic role. Furthermore, male migration has not helped to reduce household poverty. The Santhal and Munda women are better off as a result of household migration as their income goes up and the domestic work-load declines. In terms of gender relationships, in Orissa, migration has resulted in increased instability in marriage relations and has increased the inequality in power relations between men and women.

The second study, by Saradmoni, which deals with the women of Kerala, focuses on the impact of migration of single and married women. The peeling of prawns and the grading of fish are considered to be work that women are normally expected to do. The shrinking fish industry in Kerala has forced women to migrate to other states while men stay behind. These women are recruited by contractors and sent to Gujarat for five months for the peeling of prawns and grading of fish. Women in Kerala enjoy equality in schooling and employment. However, when they migrate, they are under strict restrictions. They are not allowed to move freely and can not make contact with local Gujarati women. These girls can be considered to be a "captive labour" force facing economic and sexual exploitation by the contractors. Furthermore, the earnings of these women who have migrated are either for day-to-day consumption or for health, or for improvement of houses or for weddings; but this does not provide them any future financial security.

In the third study, Teerink focuses on household migration of the Bhil tribe from Maharashtra to South Gujarat. They are sugarcane harvest workers. These households move with their entire possessions. They are recruited by contractors for eight months. Men, women, and children work in the house and in the field. This group migration is called 'Koytas'. Men cut the cane and women make bundles of cane. Women's work is dominated by men as cutting cane is considered real work and making bundles is considered as 'helping', and it is devalued. Furthermore, the wages of Koytas are not given to the woman in person but to the husband, which does not give financial independence to these working women. The workload of these women is much heavier as they live in makeshift huts. The facilities for food preparation have to be shared and mothers face problems with child-care, especially when they have to work during the night. There are no health or education facilities in the camp area.

The book clearly shows that the division of labour determines as to who migrates. For example, the peeling of prawns and the grading of fish are jobs performed by women in Kerala, therefore they migrate to Gujarat while the men remain behind. Similarly, since the Bhil women also work in the fields, they migrate with their male members.

The study shows that women have little emancipation. The 'survival' migration does not give financial independence to women. In most cases, it has not resulted in an improved financial position of the family. Most women feel bad leaving home, but the financial difficulties and non-availability of work at home have forced them to migrate. The financial gains from this migration are meagre; women are exploited economically and sexually; and gender roles and unequal gender relations are reinforced.

These studies show that the migration of women also affects the moral values of society. Women migrants are exploited sexually. They live in huts or dormitories where the living conditions are extremely poor and access to drinking-water and health services is non-existent.

On the basis of these studies we can say that the consequence of this male and female seasonal survival migration is more exploitation of women. Since women do not like to migrate, the creation of employment opportunities nearer home may result in better financial and living conditions for them. As Schenk-Sandbergen's study shows, the Banaskantha Women's Rural Development Project provides hope for the future. It has reduced the seasonal survival migration in the project area. The study shows that out of the 304 households in Banaskantha, the migrating households dropped from 146 in 1989 to 87 in 1990, and then to 53 in 1991. The economic position of women improved considerably and the exploitation of women reduced. Similarly, the living conditions in the village also improved.

These studies show that women's migration, although driven by economic factors, affects the socio-cultural life of the migrants. The non-availability of health and education facilities at the work site affects the life of not only the present workforce but