STUDIES IN MIGRATION

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Internal and International Migration in India

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2. Some Aspects of Sociology of Migration in India¹

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The importance of migration for developing countries cannot be overestimated. Migration is a major factor in economic development and manpower planning. It has acquired special significance in the context of commercialization of agriculture because of labour mobility. It is a major factor in urbanization and social change. It has notable feed-back effects on the place of origin as the migrants from rural to urban areas maintain different kinds and degrees of contact. The importance that migration occupies in the social and cultural life of the people, however, has not been commensurate with the attention it has so far received from sociologists, anthropologists and demographers in our country. This paper points out briefly some of the important dimensions of sociology of migration. This is not intended to be a review of literature on migration² although some examples are given at relevant places.

It is necessary to consider migration and settlement as interrelated aspects of social and cultural life of the people. Migration is a shift in the place of residence for some length of time. While it excludes short visits and tours, it includes different types of both voluntary and involuntary movements.

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- 2. For a recent review article on migration, see J.P. Singh [1980 : see also Connell et. al. (1976)].

Examples of involuntary movements are migration under such crises as war, transfer of population, riots, floods, droughts and earthquakes. It also includes marriage migration, virilocal, uxorilocal or neolocal and transfer migration. There are other situations of migration where movement is part of people's earning a livelihood. These are nomads, shifting cultivators, itinerant traders and salesmen, artisans and labourers. Transhumance is a special type of migration between two sets of settlements in different seasons.

Historically, both internal and overseas migration have been associated with widespread military conquests, agricultural colonization and plantations, expeditions of merchant traders, and religious missionaries, slave trade and indentured labour. These instances of migration currents provided the basis for early diffusionist, culture contact and acculturation theories. Although in some cases this approach led to pseudo-historical reconstruction of the past, where authentic historical records were available, it has led to a meaningful study of the process of colonization, labour mobility, and the confrontation between the migrant colonizers on the one hand and the native peoples on the other.

Studies in migration stemmed from two theoretical sources: culture contact theories and the Marxian analysis of colonization and alienation. While the former approach is dated, the latter is still significant in studying the process of migration and its consequences in the context of the capitalist mode of production development and underdevelopment) (Frank 1967). For instance, colonization of tribal areas in different parts of India (and in some other parts in the world) by peasants and merchants from the plains has led to conflicts between the migrants and the native tribes. Large-scale exploitation of the benefits of scarce resources by the non-tribal migrants has resulted in conditions of relatively acute deprivation of the tribals. The perception of such conditions by the local tribes has led to militant messianic and millenarian movements (See for instance, Singh K. Suresh 1966; Troisi, Joseph 1979; Raghaviah 1971). I have studied one such situation in the Polavaram taluk of West Godavari District where peasants from the plains have made steady inroads into the tribal area.

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over a period of two hundred years. The peasant colonization has led to the alienation of the Koyas in terms of loss of land, emergence of wage labour and unequal distribution of the gains of the new tobacco economy (See Chapter 7). While in Polavaram, the situation has not led to a Naxalite outbreak, in a similar situation of ethnic conflict in Srikakulam the Naxalite movement was very intense during 1969-1970.

The problem of ethnicity has assumed an important place in migration studies especially in the urban context (Vatuk 1972; Punekar 1974; Mythili, K.I. 1974; Singh, Andrea M. 1976; D'Souza 1977; Nair, K.S. 1978; Caplan, L. 1976, 1977, 1980; Lewandowski, Susan 1980; Gore 1970). Migrants belonging to a particular region, language, religion, caste, and tribe tend to live together in separate neighbourhoods in cities and they form ethnic groups on the basis of shared elements of culture and ideology, merging lower levels of differences based on sub-caste or sub-region. The earlier migrants help the fresh ones in getting jobs and houses, and initiate them into urban ways of life. Some of the affluent ethnic groups establish their own housing cooperatives, schools, dispensaries, and census, marriage and employment bureaus. They also build their places of worship. The migrant groups try to recreate their cultures, of the place of origin at the place of destination, which results in cultural pluralism (Bose, N.K. 1968). It is in this context of inter-ethnic relations and developmental process of the first generation and second generation migrants, that we have to examine such concepts as integration, assimilation, isolation, simulation, fossilization, melting pot, beyond the melting pot, and ethno-class.

Urban ethnicity, however, is not just a case of cultural pluralism. Ethnic groups get politicized, act as vote-banks and pressure-groups articulating their interests, and compete for various benefits of urban life. This results in a situation of conflict between ethnic groups and between the migrant ethnic groups and the locals which goes by the name of sons-of-thesoil movements (Weiner 1978; Gupta 1977). The present situation in Assam presents one such case which needs to be analysed in all its dimensions. It should be noted that the situation of conflict cannot be entirely explained in the straight-

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Ethnic conflict between migrant and stative ion cultural Aspects: jacket Marxian approach. The situational contexts of class and ethnicity and their varying interactions have to be checked against empirical evidence.

One of the chief reasons for conflicting relations of migrants and locals is in the sphere of employment. Some economists have proposed a dual-market hypothesis in the context of international migration. While the locals seek employment in the primary sector, the migrants are found in the secondary sector. Further while the locals are found in the higher levels of the job hierarchy the migrants occupy job in the lower levels. These two features minimize the spirit of competition. The limitation of such a hypothesis has been pointed out by Piore (1979), namely the second generation migrants who are local at any rate acquire the necessary skills and compete for the same jobs which were once monopolized by the locals.

The dual-market hypothesis, however, is not applicable to internal migration in the Indian context, where migrants having diverse skills and resources enter the job market at various levels. For instance, there are affluent migrants from Marwar and other regions of Rajasthan who have shown a high propensity to migrate to different parts of India and who have established industries and have engaged themselves in trade and commerce. The educated people from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnatak and Bengal have moved to different places in search of white-collar and professional jobs. The unskilled and semiskilled workers from Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Eastern U.P., Bihar and Orissa have moved to distant places in search of jobs in plantations, factories and in the informal sector. Hence although the competition from the migrants is endemic at every level, the question is whether the migrants belong to the same linguistic group or not. If they are not, then there are more chances for conflicting relations.

It may be argued that at least in certain sectors the competition is eliminated as the locals themselves would not like to work as plantation labourers or domestic workers, or to take up work which is considered less prestigious. This may be true only at a particular point of time, but over a period of time when jobs in the preferred sectors are taken, the locals might look for jobs in the self-employed and other categories

in the informal sectors which were earlier left to the migrants. Such a situation is also productive of conflict between the locals and migrants. It is necessary to investigate the social, economic and political conditions due to which conflicts between the locals and migrants arise and crystallize into sonsof-the-soil movements.

Another consequence of large scale migration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers to the cities, especially in metropolitan cities is the development of slums (Rao 1974). This category of migrants, having little resources to pay for the urban facilities such as housing, sewerage, drainage, water and electricity, tend to squat on public land and pavements which results in the formation of slums. Sociologists and anthropologists have shown considerable interest in the problems of slums which mainly consist of migrants (Desai and Pillai 1970; Wiebe 1975; Ranga Rao, et al. 1977; Ranga Rao and M.S.A. Rao 1984; Lynch 1974; Singh, Andrea M. and A. de Souza 1980).

Three problems are of relevance to the study of migration in the context of slums. First, most unskilled and semi-skilled rural migrants to metropolitan cities seek jobs in the informal sector of the urban economy, i.e., as construction workers, domestic servants, vendors, peddlers and hawkers, paperboys, cycle and auto mechanics, junk collectors, loaders and unloaders, basket weavers, barbers, cycle riksha drivers and shack shop and tea-stall keepers. All these jobs are an essential part of the urban economy catering to the needs of people belonging to different socio-economic strata. Often small workshops and industries manufacture machine parts to feed into bigger organised industries in the formal sector. Similarly, persons employed in the formal sector might follow certain occupations in the informal sector. The two sectors are complementary and provide a continuum in some respects depending upon the nature and levels of demands. Hence I agree with Breman (1976, 1980) and Papola (1980, 1981) who rightly question the dualism of the formal and informal sector. Further, the jobs in the informal sector should not be considered as unorganised and open. For instance, it is difficult for a migrant to get a job as loader and unloader of goods. There are norms governing recruitment

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and conditions of work and wages by the unions, which may not be the formal trade unions.

Another aspect of the informal sector is that the job structure here is governed more by primordial ties of caste, region, religion, language, village, kinship and friendship. These network relations are important in getting urban jobs for the migrants (Klass 1979). In fact the resource network is also an important factor in motivating people to move out of their places of origin, which will be considered later.

Thirdly, there are two ways of looking at the economic and social aspects of the migrant slum dwellers. One, that a slum is a community, a village writ large and it holds possibilities of occupational and social mobility. The other is that it is a den of vices and a home for the urban poor with a distinct subculture of their own, often called by the term culture of poverty. Some studies of slums show that they exhibit features of organised community life, and the migrants have achieved a level of occupational and social mobility when compared to their occupation and social standing in the place of origin, as shown by Tataji (See Chapter 6). However, we cannot rule out that there are certain slums where the social life is characterized by organized crime, delinquency, prostitution and beggary, and migrants are easily recruited into these situations. The notion of the culture of poverty (Lewis 1966) characterizing the social and economic conditions of slum dwellers in the United States, needs to be examined carefully in order to see whether it is applicable to the Indian slums. Wiebe (1975), Ranga Rao and the author (1984) in any case think that it does not.

Of the different sections of rural-urban migrants, women constitute an important section. Usually women's migration is mostly considered marriage migration. This is not entirely correct. Since many women belonging to the working class work in various capacities, even when they migrate after marriage to the places where their husbands live, they are potential workers in the place of destination. In many cases the whole family consisting of husband, wife and children moves from rural to urban areas either for a season or on a semi-permanent basis. There are also situations where some women move all by themselves, others move along with their

husbands and brothers for work. All this suggests that female migration cannot be treated as wholly marriage migration. Marriage is incidental whereas their work status is stable.)

Internal migration is related to the international migration either overseas or overland. The latter creates imbalances in certain regions in labour supply and internal migration comes as an answer. For instance, in Punjab continuous waves of overseas migration to England, United States, Canada, and now to the Gulf countries have created a shortage of labour and this gap is filled by the migrants, including the tribals, from Bihar, and U.P. (Gupta and Bhakoo 1980). However, international migration-both immigration and emigration needs to be studied in its own right. There are immigrants from Tibet who have been rehabilitated in different parts of India. There are also migrants from Nepal and Bangladesh-both legal and illegal, and they need to be studied from the point of view of adjustments. Another aspect of international migration is the question of return migration and repatriation of Indian overseas migrants. For instance, there are about 80,000 Tamil repatriates in Tamil Nadu (Cole and Wiebe 1981).

Overseas Indian migrants in different parts of the world, South and South-East Asia, Africa, England, United States, Canada and Gulf countries form a distinct category and there have been studies of these migrant Indian communities in their places of destination (see for instance the recent works by Jain 1970; Jayaraman 1975; Kannah 1978; Helweg 1979). There are significant problems of cultural adjustments, inter-ethnic relations and relations between the Indians and the locals in the host countries. The new developments of tension and riots in this regard need to be studied and analysed for promoting harmonious ethnic relations.

From the point of view of the place of origin (India) the feed-back effects of overseas migration are significant. The overseas Indians maintain contact with their places of origin and send large sums of money home for the maintenance of the family. The foreign remittances are used in buying machinery, equipment, automobiles, houses and land. Thus, it has contributed both to developmental activities and high consumerism. This money-order economy has been partly responsible for the green revolution in Punjab and the white revolution in Gujarat. However, in Kerala, gulf money is converted into status through conspicuous consumption, large houses and automobiles. But there are some investments in land, picture houses, restaurants and trade and commerce (Prakash 1978; Mathew and Nair 1978).

Feed-back effects of internal migration have different implications. Migrants here maintain more close and frequent contacts with their places of origin, through sending money home, visits and property and political relations. A distinction may be made between subsistence and development migration, with reference to the nature of consequences. Many of the unskilled and semi-skilled migrants' families at the place of origin have been able to rise above the line of poverty but still at the subsistence level. There are other families who have been able to clear all their debts, build houses and improve their standard of living. Besides these feed-back effect on the standard of living of members of the family at the place of origin, there is the problem of demographic imbalance, economic and political consequences. Way back in 1964 I.P. Desai (1964) described the patterns of emigration in a South Gujarat village, over a period of about 50 years. He showed that, as a result of cut-migration of both the upper and lower castes traditional power structure underwent significant changes. The Anavils who were once economically and politically dominant had lost that position. Valunjkar (1966) has also described the changes in a village due to migration.

Of all the different streams of migration in India (and other developing countries) rural-rural occupies a central place as it accounts for about 70 per cent of total migration. A few demographers consider this as unimportant, because they consider much of it as marriage migration of females. As we have noted, this is a simplistic explanation because among the working class, women also work for a living. Husband and wife either together or separately migrate to places where employment opportunities are available. Rural migration consists of movement of landowning peasants and farmers, labourers, artisans and service castes and tribes. Under programmes of rehabilitation, such sections of population as nomads, criminal tribes, Harijans, and refugees, are settled into

various types of colonies. In this context the matter for investigation is the way a new community organization emerges involving diverse migrant social groups which are thrown together. Another area of investigation is the process of sedentarization of groups which were hitherto nomads and its social and cultural consequences.

Migration of tribals to plantations, other rural areas, industrial complexes and urban areas poses several specific questions for sociological investigation. Their problems of adjustment are different from those of non-tribal labourers and peasants. There are both the problems of inter-tribal relations and the tribal and non-tribal relations, in such cities as Shillong and Imphal which need to be investigated besides their changing economic and property relations and family and religious life. N.C. Choudhuri (1963) shows that tribes move in groups maintaining their ethnic identity at the place of destination (See also Chapter 10).

Peasant and farmer migration in the rural context has several variations. Peasants have moved to large river valley project areas either on their own or under the sponsorship by the government. It is seen that peasants who have had experience of flow irrigation voluntarily move to the new river valley project areas. They legally buy land from the locals and establish their settlements called 'camps'. The labourers also move as it becomes a labour demand area. These processes of colonization and labour mobility are discussed by N.E.C. Vidyasagar in his thesis (1982).

Migration of agricultural labourers, both seasonal and permanent, in other rural areas gives rise to a different set of problems related to their conditions of work, nature of their exploitation by the middle men and the relationship between the migrant farmers and locals, and the impact of migration on their places of origin. Labourers move in units of household and also singly. The situation of single female migrants provides an interesting area of sociological investigation. I have examined (study in progress) the reasons and social consequences of migration of single females who grade tobacco with the farmers and factories in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Their movements involve a distance of 200 to 800 miles.

Seasonal migration occupies a very important place in

migration studies, but unfortunately it is the most neglected area. Since the census data are not useful in this regard, primary studies are needed to unravel the different dimensions of the problem, including working conditions, the role of middle men, nature of exploitation and an assessment of relevant legislations. Seasonal migration has acquired a singular importance in the context of commercial crops, such as cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, potato, groundnut and mulberry. There are other operations which need seasonal labour such as bamboo cutting, felling of trees for timber and cutting wood for fuel, construction of roads in forest and other areas and desilting of tanks and canals and building tanks, bridges and dams. I have pointed out elsewhere (Rao, M.S.A., 1981a, 1981b) that contrary to the popular impression, seasonal migration is work specific and a certain group specializes in a particular job. For instance, Muslims of Nambur, a village near Guntur, are expert tobacco curers; agricultural labourers, mostly Malas and Madigas in Guntur and Krishna districts are known for their skills in harvesting and grading flue cured virginia tobacco; labourers from Palamuri (Andhra Pradesh) and Orissa are known for earth work; labourers from Rajasthan are good construction workers; labourers from Khandesh are good cane cutters: labourers from Rajamundri District are good bamboo cutters. Such specialized skills are built over two or three generations.

Seasonality of migration is relative to economic and social conditions of migrants at the place of origin and of destination. Migrants who, in the first instance, intend to stay only for the duration of the task, tend to stay on if economic conditions are favourable. After all, they say that they live on the strength of their shoulders and it does not matter where they work. But by and large seasonal migrants have a place of origin where they might have some land and a hut and they might move out for two different seasons in a year after spending some time, in between, in their village.

Seasonal migrants tend to be exploited by the middle men, and hence the process of recruitment and different patterns of organization of work needs to be studied in detail. Breman (1978) has discussed the jobber type of organization of migrant cane cutters from Khandesh in the sugar factories in South

Gujarat. This pattern of organization is an agreement between the cooperative sugar factories and the jobbers. However, there are other types of organization. The one which is popular in Andhra Pradesh is the *banta* type (Rao 1978) in which a *maistry* builds up a team of twenty workers and enters into contract with the farmers directly to execute particular operations, such as harvesting of tobacco, rice, cane or cotton. In this type the degree of exploitation by the middle men is reduced to the minimum. In fact, the *maistry* is himself a worker and gets only one day's wages of each worker in his team as his commission. Hence there is a need to investigate all the different types of work situations and their social consequences.

So far we have discussed two aspects of migration and migrants, first, what happens to the migrants in the place of destination, how do they adjust themselves, what kind of relations they would establish with the locals, and what kind of social consequences would follow. Secondly, what are the feed-back effects of migration on the place of origin of the migrants. There is the third aspect of migration studies which is very significant, namely why people move and under what conditions migration materializes. This problem has been the subject of much theorizing. Of all the social scientists, interested in migration, economists have been the foremost in advancing theories to explain migration flows. Migration is considered to be a function of labour reallocation in response to market demands, so that the demand and supply of labour are always. in equilibrium. Labour mobility occurs in direct response to expected wage differential between rural and urban areas (Harris and Todaro 1970). It is also argued that if the wage differential between the rural and urban sectors is in excess of the equilibrium, the intersectoral transfers will continue until there is equality. Further, given higher wages in urban areas, people would be attracted from low income underdeveloped regions in numbers much larger than the available employment opportunities on the chance of their getting into a job. One way out of this puzzle is to say that migrants may enter into. informal sector. Migration is also considered as an investment in human capital involving cost-benefit analysis at different levels. At the individual level, it is argued that migration is based on careful calculations involving money and non-money (psychological) costs. While some economists do consider the importance of non-economic factors in explaining migration (for instance Piore 1979), others assume that the individual is a rational economic man interested in maximization of profit or utility, and it is the poor who move out attracted by higher wages. The limitation of this theory is that it does not explain why, among people placed in the same economic circumstances, some move and others do not. Secondly, why people who are well off also move to cities. Hence it is safer to assume that economic considerations do not wholly explain why people move. Further where they are important, they provide only the necessary conditions for people to migrate, the sufficient conditions are provided by non-economic factors which explain how migration occurs.

Some economists and demographers have tried to explain migration in terms of push and pull on the basis of higher landman ratio, underemployment at the place of origin and the pull of higher wages, the bright lights of the city, opportunities for education and training. The push and pull approach like the economic one assumes that it is only the poor and low paid that move out, and there are no pulls in the rural areas and no pushes in the urban areas (Bose 1965). Further, these approaches are concerned with the rural-urban migration and not rural-rural which accounts for about 70 per cent of migration.

The demographic approach to migration is mainly based on census data which takes place of birth as the criterion for determining the migratory status although recently place of last residence and duration of stay have been added. I have pointed out the inadequacy of place of birth criterion (Rao 1976) elsewhere. Further, some demographers equate intradistrict migration with short distance migration and interdistrict and inter-state with long distance migration as Premi (1980 : 716) does. One can see the absurdity of this statement. In the case of inter-district or inter-state migration, place of origin and place of destination may be adjacent lying on the two sides of the district boundary line. In such a case it is a case of short distance migration. However, I consider good demographic studies of migration are important in knowing the magnitudes of the different aspects of migration.

Sociological approach to migration has been built up over a period of years in bits and pieces since Marxian culturecontact, and Revenstien's (1885) theories. For instance, with reference to step migration of Revenstien, it is observed that it is only one of the analogies of the way in which migration occurs. There are others: radial, circular and zig-zag migration patterns. Similarly, the notion that people initially move to places which are nearer is contradicted by the evidence that people also migrate first to far-off places because they have prior kin, caste, regional and other links with that place. Hence, selectivity is based on social factors and not on the factor of propinquity of the place of destination.

In my studies of migration, I have found that social network (including ties of kin, caste, village language) is the most effective channel of communication (information system) which favours decision making in migration. Very rarely people move without prior information and a linkage of some kind or the other.

It is not my intention here to expand and add to the insights provided by several sociological studies regarding different dimensions of migration. I believe that any adequate sociological analysis should recognize the complexity and the multi-dimensional aspects of the problem and seek not only to isolate variables but work out their interconnections. Thus, any study of migration should consider the historical development of the region, the wider economic and political conditions which regulate and condition the nature of employment opportunities. Secondly, economic and social conditions at the place of origin need to be examined in order to understand why people move or do not move. At the individual level we have to consider not only the level of skills and family circumstances but the whole process of socialization and personality factors. It is important to realize that economic factors provide only the necessary conditions of migration, the sufficient conditions are the motivations to move, presence of resource networks and access to information flows. The latter make migration selective in terms of age, sex marital status and the phase of development of the domestic group.

What happens to the migrants at the place of destination, their problems and process of settlement, employment, success. and failure and their social organization are not entirely unrelated to their contacts with the place of origin. Hence the continuing interaction process between the place of origin and of destination is an essential aspect of migration studies. The best methodology to study migration is to make double ended studies, i.e. studies of migrants both at the place of destination and of origin. The distinct advantage of studying the process of migration at the place of origin is to place the migrants in the wider contexts of their family, caste, villageand region, and to explain why out of persons who are similarly situated, some migrate and others do not. It helps investigation of the return migration. Under what circumstances, people return to their place of origin. Broadly, there are three circumstances: one where people return because of frustration and secondly people return for a short period in order to go again. Thirdly, people return for good. In some case they will have both capital and skills and are capable of innovation in. agriculture, trade, commerce and industry.

In the end I will argue that a cultural interpretation is: important in gaining a deeper understanding of the process. of migration.³ In this context we have to treat migration and settlement of mobile and stationary states (jangama and sthavira) as a binary opposition. Staying out and moving about are related to people's conceptions of space and time. People invest meaning to a place or territory in which they live and they also attach meaning to their movements. In this process. they develop a set of symbols of both rootedness and mobility. In the context of Kamma peasants, who are known for their migratory propensity, the following oppositions are observed. Place of birth is considered to be sacred as the body first touched the ground there. Blood ties (agnatic ties) make peoplestick to the place of origin as they form the base of descent, succession and inheritance. Ancestral land is also sacred as it is symbolic of ancestor worship. There is the custom of burying

3. This brief exposition is based on my fieldwork on migration of peasants and labourers in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka during my UGC National Fellowship (1977-79). See also Chapter 7 in this. volume

the aged grandparents after death in the ancestral land and erect tombs for them. Kamma peasants also develop attachment to the village in which they grew up with specific associations to ancestral home, play-ground and school; to events of quarrel and love, and to sounds of hooting flour mill, and smells of cooking, flowers and crops. Thus, territoriality becomes an ethno-phenomenon. The question is how do they overcome the limitations of these cultural symbols of rootedness?

Kammas argue that they value the set of symbols associated with mobility more than that associated with rootedness. They say that while a tree strikes roots and gets fixed, the seeds are free to fly. The blood sticks but semen spreads. That is, while agnatic ties encourage rootedness to property through inheritance, the affinal relations sponsor mobility. Future is more attractive than the past. Acquired land is more prestigious than the ancestral. Territoriality is bondage but migration is freedom. Spirit of adventure and risk are more desirable than conservatism. This set of symbols promotes spatial mobility. Therefore, migration is a structural transformation of symbols of rootedness into symbols of mobility.

It may be argued that when Kammas move from their ancestral village to another place and establish a settlement, they will be striking roots again. While this is true for the time being, after some time the same process of dispersal (of seeds) starts. Staying put and moving about are relative. Both territoriality and movement need to be explained, and the symbolic interpretation emphasizing the native categories of thought regarding space and time, stationary and mobile states enables us to gain deeper insights in understanding the process of migration.

Cultural symbols far from being fixed are dynamic and undergo significant changes in the context of cumulative experience of people, changing interests and demonstration effects. They enter into the socialization process and influence peoples' interests, and attitudes towards migration and their consequent behaviour. Hence, there is no hiatus between cultural and sociological interpretations in analysing and understanding migration.

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