

# From Hills to Foothills: An Anthropological Perspective on Internal Migration of Tribals in Arunachal Pradesh

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## Abstract

The study of the movements of people has been an important dimension of anthropological discourse that offered a unique opportunity for anthropologists to study centre-periphery relations and to gain new insights into population movements produced by regional and global political, economic, and historical processes. A range of factors are associated with the internal migration of tribal people in Arunachal Pradesh from their ancestral habitations that is hills, to the foothills. This paper aims to find out the factors responsible for migration of the tribals. The study has been conducted in Papum Pare district of Arunachal Pradesh on the people migrated from Kurung Kumey district. The major finding of the study is that tribal people are to a great extent migrated to foothills voluntarily for economic reason. It also indicates that among tribal communities living in the capital region of Arunachal Pradesh, mainly Nyishi people have been migrated in large number. It finds that youth are clearly ahead of their counterparts in migrating to the foothills. The traditional culture and customs of the migrants are significantly affected after their migration which has been highlighted in the present paper.

**Keywords:** Hills; Foothills; Tribal; Internal Migration; Papum Pare; Kurung Kumey; Arunachal Pradesh.

## Introduction

Migration is best understood as one of the strategies adopted by individuals, households or communities to enhance their livelihoods because in general migration has a function of reducing vulnerability – effective migration strategies helps people to reduce the risks of seasonality, harvest failure, etc. (Deogharia, 2012: 49). It is argued that migration is caused by a series of forces that encourage an individual to leave one place (push) and attract him to another (pull).

The study of spatial and social movements of people has been an important dimension of anthropological discourse. The migration of people

offered a unique opportunity for anthropologists to study centre-periphery relations and to gain new insights into population movements produced by regional and global political, economic, and historical processes. In addition, these population movements provided the potential for informing our anthropological understanding of the adaptation processes of diverse ethnic groups who found themselves in new, challenging socio-cultural environments (Hanifi, 2000: 292). Besides, the study of forced migrants is now a major area within anthropology, which has been able to draw on earlier sociological studies of immigrant communities and anthropological studies of labour migration and settlement in urban areas (Colson, 2003: 1). Following Hugo (1984), the contribution of micro qualitative

approach to migration study has already been underlined: combining an anthropological type of observation with a quantitative demographic survey improves the understanding of mobility processes (Dupont, 1989: 1).

Migration and flight movements constitute a relatively new field of research in social and cultural anthropology. Anthropological approaches in migration studies offer ways to capture effects of migration and flight movements. The research process must address juxtapositions of changing social, territorial, and cultural forms of the reproduction of group identities (Binder and Tosjic, 2005: 607). Anthropology's traditional focus on the local, and the descriptive strength of ethnographic research, makes an anthropological approach appropriate to the research question. An anthropological account of migration must also take into account that modern migration is inextricably linked to broader economic, political and historical processes (Brause, 2011: 10).

*The use of anthropology in the study of migration is no exception. Arjun Appadurai (1991:191) writes*

*As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic 'projects,' the ethno in ethnography takes a slippery, non-localized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology, will have to respond. The landscapes of group identity- the ethnoscares- around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous.*

Narratives about migration, achieved through formal interviews, casual conversations, and anthropological observations, help the researcher to understand how individuals make meaning of their lives, and experience structural pressures. Narratives are a very effective tool for learning about the role of the individual in migration (Brause, 2011: 11).

From ancient period, migration has been considered as an important phenomenon around the world (Chakma and Akhy, 2015: 268). In human history, people have been moving from one area to another for various causes. It is often defined as a form of geographical or spatial mobility, which involves a change of usual residence of a person between clearly defined geographical units (Gautam, 2005: 1). When an individual or the group of individuals move from one region to another may be called as migration. In other words, Migration is the movement of people from one place to another by usually crossing the political boundary to overcome

either their crisis of residency or economic pursuits (Ray and Biswas, 2013: 685).

According to International Migration Report 2002, it has been estimated that around 175 million people currently reside in a state other than where they were born, equivalent to around 3 percent of the world population (Giddens, 2006). In twenty-first century, mainly because of rapid globalization and industrialization, people are moving within inland and cross own state sovereign border more easily than ever. In the period of "age of migration" the marginalized people of a state, like ethno-religious minority, tribal and tribal people had also been influenced to migrate for various political and economic causes. Historically, in India, disadvantaged communities such as the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes (OBCs) are heavily represented in migration. A range and combination of push and pull factors drive circular migration particularly the tribals. Circular migration, or rural-urban migration, is emerging as a dominant form of migration amongst Scheduled Tribes in India. This process often negatively influences the tribal culture and identity (Planning Commission of India, 2010: 8 & 9).

This article tries to concentrate on internal migration of tribal people from Kurung Kumey district to foothills of Papum Pare district in Arunachal Pradesh. The Kurung Kumey district has its distinct character and it is around one-tenth of Arunachal Pradesh. It has distinct character not only for its hilly landscape but also for ethnicity and culture of its 3 different tribal ethnic groups. In recent years internal migration of tribal people from the Kurung Kumey district to foothills, especially to the industrialized areas, has been significant. Historically the migration of these people has been occurred in four different phases: societal; developmental; communal; and political.

It has been noticed in the first phase of tribal people's internal migration to foothills that the Kurung Kumey district people has developed their own cultivation system which is widely known as "Jhum" cultivation or shifting/Sweden cultivation. Movement in household level from hill to hill searching cultivable hilly land for Jhum cultivation was a historical and societal part of tribal migration. They were migratory in culture because of this cultivation system.

In the second phase the tribal people have been in developmental paradox. It was development for underdevelopment. Tribal people have been forcefully migrated due to state governed developmental project.

In the next phase, tribal people got a suitable time to be institutionally educated. As there were no industrial bases in the Kurung Kumey district area to accommodate the educated and less-educated people, they started migrating towards foothills of Arunachal Pradesh.

### *Objectives*

This paper aims to find out the push and pull factors responsible for internal migration of tribal people from different places of the Kurung Kumey district to foothill areas of Papum Pare district in different phases. Everett Lee's (1996) push-pull factors have been used in analyzing the causes related in the internal migration of tribal people. This study has been conducted to focus on two major objectives.

- i. Firstly, to find out the causes of internal migration of tribal people from the Kurung Kumey district; and
- ii. Secondly, to search the impact on socio-cultural and demographic life of tribal people due to migration.

### **Methodology**

The study has been conducted in quantitative manner. For collecting data a survey was conducted at Naharlagun town in capital region of Arunachal Pradesh. According to local data, this town is the largest host area of migrant tribal people. 250 respondents were selected following random and accidental method. The survey was conducted between December 2015 and January 2016 to collect primary data from the study area. The questionnaire of data collection was formulated by both 9 open ended and 78 close ended questions. In this article deductive method was followed and the migration trends of tribal people have been narrated according to Everett Lee's (1966) push-pull factors. Relevant data have been used from secondary sources including books, journals, government and non-government reports, articles, newspapers, etc.

### *Profile of Respondents*

Respondents have been found to be come from various socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic minority groups. Considering their ethnic composition, 82.0% of the migrants are from Nyishi ethnic group, 10.8% are found from Bangru, and from Puroik (2.8%). As the data shows, youth (52.8%) are found more migrated than their counterparts.

Collected data shows that maximum migrants, both male and youth, are young in age. 33.6% of total respondents are in age group (21-25). 24% migrants are from 26-30 age group and 21.2% are from 19-20 age group. 44.8% of migrants passed secondary school and 34.4% higher secondary level. 64% of the respondents reported that they have no more than 2-3 members in their family. More than half of migrants (53.2%) stated their monthly income around 5001-10,000 Rupees while 24.8% migrants earn 3001-5000 Rupees in a month. A few migrants (3.6% only) earn more than 20,000 Rupees. 39.6% of total respondents reported that the tenure of their migration is 2-3 years. Only 11.2% respondents reported that the tenure of their migration is more than 10 years (Table 1).

### *Causes of Internal Migration*

Various reasons have been found responsible for the internal migration of the tribal people of Kurung Kumey district. These reasons are categorized under push and pull factors. This study has found that the pull factors as well as the push factors are equally responsible for internal migration of the tribals.

- *Push Factors*

The various push factors that the study has identified are the lack of employment opportunities, political instability, intra-ethnic conflict, etc. in the Kurung Kumey district (Table 2). It is observed that, the tribal young educated male and youth are not interested in their traditional professions like *Jhum* cultivation or agriculture based activities. Scarcity of employment opportunities in Kurung Kumey district is the prime push factor behind the tribal people's internal migration. The Kurung Kumey district is one of the most impoverished regions of the state with complete absence of any industrial infrastructure. Since there is no altertribal way to hard-cash income in the region except agricultural activities and government jobs, the vast majority of the total respondents (44.8%) had to migrate from their tribal place. Agricultural sector is one of the most important income sources of the people of the Kurung Kumey district.

According to the collected data, other reasons of internal migration are political instability in Kurung Kumey district and intra-ethnic conflicts among tribal people. 8.4% respondents migrated to the study area due to political instability. Side by side intra-tribal conflicts in Kurung Kumey district recently have become an emerging reason for migration. 3.6% respondents were migrated because of this continuous intra-ethnic conflict. 4.0% are found to

be migrated due to scarcity of educational facilities in the district.

- *Pull Factors*

Some strong pull factors have attracted the tribal people of Kurung Kumey district to the foothills (Table 3). A large number of migrants have chosen this study area as destination because of its some industrial infrastructure. 60% of the respondents shared that they have come to this area for employment purpose. It is a bit easier for less-skilled and unskilled labour to find out jobs like, security guard, drivers, etc.

Respondents chose this area for living because they have available known persons. 24.4% respondents accounted that they had available known person (relatives, friends, villagers, etc.) in this area before migration. Those known people provided shelter and other assistance before getting job. This network helps them to continue their migration.

Naharlagun is the nearest industrialized area for the people of Kurung Kumey district. According to Ravenstein's laws of migration (1885), people try to migrate in low distance which supports the flow of tribal people's migration to the foothills (Gautam, 2005: 06). 7.2% shared that they live in this place because it is very easy to come in this area from the Kurung Kumey district, easy to go back. So, they can stand beside their family in any problem. They can easily attend in any social festival or programme in their area of origin.

Civic facilities of this urban area are considered as an encouraging factor of tribal migration. The education system and health facilities attracted migrants. 4.4% of respondents identified that they have migrated because of educational facilities while 4.0% of them found migrated for health facilities.

To sum up it can be said that the cause of migration of tribal people from hills to foothills is mainly for economic reasons. A large scale of tribal people has been migrating internally to industrialized regions in order to earn hard-cash income and for economic solvency.

### *Impacts of Migration*

This section concentrates on the overall consequences of internal migration of the Kurung Kumey district tribal people. The data sheet shows that certain socio-cultural and demographic impacts on the tribal people have been occurred due to migration from hill to plain districts (Table 4). This section tries to analyze the demographic, social, and

cultural impacts of migration.

- *Demographic Impacts*

There are various demographic impacts on migrant people in the study area. It is observed only a few percent people of migrant both male and youth are old in age. The absence of aged people makes an imbalanced generation gap in the study area. Due to lack of aged and experienced population in the area, the ethnic norms and values have become faded. The most important demographic impact is low birth rate due to migration. Traditionally the tribal society prefers extended family type, but this trend is changing in a large scale due to migration. It is noticed that the number of children is decreasing day by day in the responded family. 86.4% respondent reported they have children between 1 and 2. 90.8% migrants reported they are living in single family. 87.2% of total respondent supported that single family is better in city life because of less income, poor housing condition and more expenses. Breaking in traditional family structure changes social ties, norms, and values.

- *Social and Cultural Impacts*

The most important impact of internal migration is noticed on socio-cultural life of tribal people. The change of traditional food habit is one of the major impacts on the tribal culture. The tribal people have a distinct food habit which based on *Jhum* cultivation and on hilly landscape in the Kurung Kumey district. The food habit has been changing due to migration in foothills. 65.2% of total respondents reported their food habit is changing for internal migration. The frequency of having *Jhum* food has been reduced after being migrated from Kurung Kumey district. Only 15.2% respondent reported that they consume *Jhum* food in everyday meals.

Cooking curry using bamboo tube is one of the most favourite cooking systems in these societies. The rate of cooking carry by bamboo has alarmingly decreased. 76.4% of total migrants do not use this traditional cooking system due to lack of cooking instrument. Having boiled food (without oil and spice) has also decreased. As the data shows using oil in cooking has increased extremely, 48.4% of total respondents noted it. Collected data shows the dependency on fast food has been increased moderately.

The tribal people's traditional dress-up pattern drastically differs from the mainstream people of Arunachal Pradesh. The decrease in the use of

traditional dress is alarming for their identity and distinctiveness. 21.6% of total respondents reported they do not totally use their traditional dress. From the rest proportions of respondent 29.2% use traditional dress only when they stay in house while 27.2% use their traditional dress occasionally. 58% of total respondent marked that they put on non-traditional dress in the occasion of their wedding ceremony.

Usage of own mother language is also facing extinction after migration in plain land. The migrant tribal people can't use their own language. Moreover, tribal languages have been mixed with Hindi,

English, and Assamese words. 6.8% migrants use Hindi as official language most of the time in a day. On the other hand, 11.6% respondents reported that they use Hindi language with family members in house and 20.8% children do not use mother tongue as a medium of communication.

Drinking homemade alcohol in social festival is a part of culture of these societies. Serving homemade alcohol to any new guest is a matter of honour among the people in Kurung Kumey district. Mass adult people drink this alcohol to get relaxed from workload. But many young migrants in this area are observed getting addicted of drinking alcohol.

**Table 1:** Socio-Economic Condition of Respondents

Socio-Economic Variables	N = 250						Percentage
	Nyishi (82.0%)		Bangru (10.8%)		Puroik (2.8%)		
Ethnic Groups	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Sex	(39.2%)	(42.8%)	(0.4%)	(6.8%)	(1.2%)	(1.6%)	
<b>Age Group</b>							
14 – 18	06	03	00	00	01	00	10 (4.0)
19 – 20	23	25	01	02	00	01	52 (20.8)
21 – 25	30	34	05	07	01	02	79 (31.6)
26 – 30	21	28	01	06	01	01	58 (23.2)
31 – 40	11	13	02	02	00	00	18 (7.2)
40+	07	04	01	00	00	00	12 (4.8)
<b>Educational Qualification</b>							
Secondary	54	44	02	06	01	02	109 (43.6)
Hr. Secondary	30	39	05	06	01	01	82 (32.8)
Graduate	08	16	02	02	00	01	29 (11.6)
Post Graduate	02	02	01	01	01	00	7 (2.8)
<b>Profession</b>							
Garment Workers	69	87	06	13	02	03	180 (72.0)
Security Guard	07	00	01	00	00	00	8 (3.2)
Govt. Employee	05	04	02	03	01	00	15 (6.0)
Non-Govt. Employee	12	15	01	01	00	01	30 (12.0)
Business	05	00	00	00	00	00	5 (2.0)
Unemployed	00	01	00	00	00	00	1 (0.4)
<b>Monthly Income of Respondents (In Rs.)</b>							
0 - 3000	00	01	00	00	00	00	1 (0.4)
3001 – 5000	21	33	02	04	00	01	61 (24.4)
5001 - 10,000	47	59	07	10	02	02	127 (50.8)
10,001 - 15,000	14	18	00	03	01	00	36 (14.4)
15,001 - 20,000	11	04	00	00	00	01	16 (6.4)
20,000+	05	02	01	00	00	00	8 (3.2)
<b>Tenure of Migration (Year)</b>							
Less Than 2	35	31	03	06	01	01	77 (30.8)
2 – 5	34	43	04	07	02	03	93 (37.2)
6 – 10	19	18	02	03	00	00	42 (16.8)
10+	10	15	01	01	00	00	27 (10.8)
<b>Number of Family Member of Respondent</b>							
2 – 3		134		16		03	153 (61.2)
4 – 6		62		10		04	76 (30.4)
7 – 10		11		01		00	12 (4.8)
10+		00		00		00	0 (0.0)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>250 (100)</b>

Source: Field Survey 2015.

**Table 2:** Push Factors for Migration

Push Factors	Political Instability (8.4%)		Education (4.0%)		Employment (44.8%)		Intra-Ethnic Conflict (3.6%)		
	Sex	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>Ethnic Composition</b>									
Nyishi	12	06	02	05	31	56	15	18	
Bangru	01	01	01	02	05	10	01	01	
Puroik	00	00	00	00	02	02	00	00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>5.60</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>1.20</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>16.40</b>	<b>28.40</b>	<b>6.40</b>	<b>7.60</b>	

Source: Field Survey 2015.

**Table 3:** Pull Factors for Migration

Pull Factors	Job Facilities		Good Network		Short Distance		Educational Facilities		Health		
	Sex	M (25.2%)	F (34.8%)	M (2.4%)	F (2%)	M (12.8%)	F (11.6%)	M (4.4%)	F (2.8%)	M (2.4%)	F (1.6%)
<b>Ethnic Composition</b>											
Nyishi	51	73	04	03	27	22	10	06	06	06	03
Bangru	06	09	01	01	03	05	00	01	00	00	01
Puroik	02	03	00	01	01	00	00	00	00	00	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>60.00</b>	<b>87.00</b>	<b>24.80</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>12.80</b>	<b>11.60</b>	<b>4.40</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>1.60</b>

Source: Field Survey 2015

**Table 4:** Impacts on Migrant Tribal People

	N = 250	Percentage
<b>Changes in Food Habit for Migration</b>		
<b>Cooking Curry by Using Bamboo Tube</b>		
Yes	59	23.6
No	191	76.4
<b>Frequency of having Jhum Food</b>		
Daily	38	15.2
Once in a week	74	29.6
Once in a month	56	22.4
Once in year	82	32.8
<b>Changes in Dress-Up Pattern</b>		
<b>Use Traditional Dress</b>		
Yes	196	78.4
No	54	21.6
<b>Frequency of Using Traditional Dress</b>		
Only in house	73	29.2
Occasionally in house	68	27.2
Occasionally in public place	39	15.6
Always in Public place	16	6.4
<b>Dresses Wear in Wedding Ceremony</b>		
Traditional dress	94	37.6
Non-traditional dress	145	58.0
Others	11	4.4
<b>Changes in Using Language for Communication</b>		
<b>Language Used Maximum Time in a Day</b>		
Mother tongue	108	43.2
Hindi	142	56.8
<b>Language Used with Family Members</b>		
Mother tongue	221	88.4
Hindi	29	11.6
<b>Children' Use of Mother Tongue as Medium of Communication</b>		
Yes	198	79.2
No	52	20.8

Family Types		
Single	227	90.8
Extended	23	9.2
No. of Children		
1 – 2	216	86.4
3 – 4	27	10.8
5 – 6	07	2.8
Participation in Indigenous Social Festival		
Yes	214	85.6
No	36	14.4

Source: Field Survey 2015.

## Conclusion

The tribal people are marked as most peripheral community in the modern world system. Because of having social institution, legal system, and cultural pattern different from the dominant class of society, they are considered most vulnerable minority in a state. There have approximately 26 tribal groups been living in Arunachal Pradesh for centuries. Migration, among various causes, is one of the most important issues continuously affecting on overall livelihoods of tribal people in Arunachal Pradesh. This study aims at to find out the causes and impacts of internal migration of people from Kurung Kumey district to the capital region of Arunachal Pradesh. The major findings of the study is that the internal migration has been occurring mainly due to economic and political reasons and it keep impacts on the social, cultural, and demographic lives of the people in terms of birth rates, food habits, languages, and traditional costumes. It has become a common phenomenon that internal migration makes changes in social structure, community ties, and traditional norms and values.

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