

## CHAPTER NINE

### IMPACT OF LABOR MIGRATION: A VILLAGE STUDY

#### Introduction

International labor migration has often been seen as a short-cut to development by many sending countries because of its role in unemployment relief, balance of payment relief, and capital formation at national level. I argue that the causes and effects of emigration can better be understood only when the process is placed within its local context. The thesis examines the impact of labor migration on the migrants and their families as they are the main actors in the migration process and they are supposed to be the main consumers of the fruit of migration<sup>1</sup>. I use ‘the Four R’s approach to examine the impact of labor migration on the migrants and their families<sup>2</sup>. The data are collected from Hogla Kandi, a village, 30 km Southeast of Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh. A structured questionnaire having both open-ended and closed category questions was used among 50 Singapore returnees, supplemented with additional in-depth interviews.

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<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh Bank report reveals that the volume of remittances is increasing almost every year (See Chapter Three). However, I argue that the increase of volume may be a sign of success / gain at the national aggregate; on the whole, it does not mean that migrants and their families are being benefited by the migration.

<sup>2</sup> I published the major findings of this chapter in *International Migration*, Volume 38, No.4, 2000.

### **The Study Village: Hoglakandi**

Hoglakandi, where I carried out my fieldwork, is a village from where hundreds of migrant workers migrated to Singapore for temporary work. I conducted field study from July to August 1999. Table 9.1 shows the general features of Hoglakandi. Hoglakandi is located in Munshiganj Sadar Thana under Munshiganj District (See Appendix-4-3, 4 for map). Munshiganj Sadar is the most populous Thana of the Munshiganj district. The Thana occupies an area of 160.79 sq. km. including 6.73 sq. km. river area. It is located between 23° 23' and 23° 35' north latitudes and between 90° 28' and 90° 15' east longitudes. Munshiganj Sadar Thana consists of 9 unions, 3 wards, 86 mauzas, 33 mahallahs, and 219 villages. The average population of union, ward, mauza, mahallah, and village are 28058, 1410, 2936, 1282 and 1153 respectively. The total population of Hoglakandi is 2515 (male 1326, female 1189) (see Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999). Hoglakandi is under Char Kewar Union. According to 1991 census, there were 50,609 families in the Munshiganj Thana. In Hoglakandi, there are 416 families. The average family size for the Thana is 5.8 persons (Bangladesh Statistical Year Book, 1999).

In the Thana, 75.88 per cent of the dwelling families use tube-well, 7.03 per cent tap, 0.38 percent use dug-well, 6.78 per cent use pond and 9.93 per cent use canal /river as main source of drinking water. In the Thana, 49.05 per cent of the dwelling families depend on agriculture as the main source of families' income with 25.64 per cent on cultivation/share cropping, 2.13 per cent on livestock, forestry and fishery, 0.16 per cent on pisciculture and 21.12 per cent as agricultural labor. Other sources of family income are non-agricultural labor (4.97%), business (19.31%) and employment (9.34%).

According to 1991 census, 32.73% of the population are below 10 years of age. The distribution of working population shows agriculture (18.26%), industry (1.23%), construction (0.71%), transportation and communication (1.24%), business (8.70%), services-self employed (1.21%) and others (9.90%). In the Thana, the literacy (7 years and over) is 35.8 per cent for both sexes, 40.9 per cent for male and 30.0% per cent for female. In Hoglekandi, the literacy rate (above 7 years) is 24.3 per cent (male 30% and female 17.3%) (Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh, 1999).

Hoglekandi, like most villages in Bangladesh, presents a picture of serenity, a portrait of tranquillity. And like most other villages, the appearance of unparalleled natural beauty hides the harsh reality of political economy. Paradoxically, nature is at the same time both bountiful and punishing. All arable land of this village remains under water approximately from May to November of every year. Water is everywhere yet there is hardly any fish to catch. Therefore fishing has not evolved as a secondary source of earnings. Water logging is a problem not only in this village but also other villages in this region. Potato is the only crop that they can produce once in a year and the earnings of the families are shaped by the quantity and quality of potato production. This community-based study is in a sense more exploratory and descriptive than analytical.

## **Socio-demographic Profiles of Migrant Families**

Table 9.2 presents the socio-demographic data on returnees and their families. Temporary labor migration is age selective. The study supports this assumption. 34 percent of returnees are from 21 to 25 age-group, 24 percent from 26 to 30 age-group, and 20 percent from 31 to 35 age-group. Migration tendency amongst the younger and older population is also noticed in Hoglekandi. 10 percent of returnees are from the 20 and below age-group while 12 percent are from the 36 and above age-group. The returnees were from a lower educational background. 84 percent possess primary education (1-5 years schooling) only. Bangladesh is a rural country and the extended family pattern is to be predominant in rural Bangladesh. 76 per cent were from extended family background. I have found that 64 percent of returnees were married and 36 percent were unmarried. I did not get any case of divorce or broken family. The average family size, according to my finding, is 7 while average family size in rural Bangladesh is 5.4 (Bangladesh Statistical Year Book 1996). With regard to total number of international migrants in each family, I have found that 28 percent of families had more than one migrant.

## **The Four R's of Labor Migration**

### **Resources**

An area of major concern for villages is to try and control the outflow of financial resources. This is important in the Bangladeshi context where the average farmer has very little capacity to save and is perennially dependent on borrowing at the start of each planting season. Given this situation, two objectives for the survey were to obtain an indication of the extent to which funds flow out of the village, and to identify the major areas affected by this outflow. The potential migrants pay their economic cost of migration in the form of cash money to local agents in Bangladesh<sup>3</sup>. The cost of migration of returnees was substantial. On average, 80 percent of returnees paid between Taka 180,000 to 220,000 (US\$ 4,000 to 4,700) for their migration (Table 9.3). The returnees who paid below Tk.180,000 (US\$4,000) were mainly early migrants and some cases they were skilled workers. Usually, the cost of migration for skilled migrants is much less than that of unskilled migrants.

The expenses involved were indeed very high and definitely beyond the immediate means of practically all the returnee families. As a result, the major means was to borrow. Amongst the returnees, 72 percent borrowed money from traditional moneylenders while 28 percent did not. Concerning the extent of borrowing and other alternatives used to raise the necessary funds, on average, 51 percent of the total cost of migration came from traditional moneylenders (see Table 9.4). In the case of rates of interest of borrowed money, the study found that 91 percent of workers paid Taka 6 to 11

and the rest 9 percent paid Taka 2 to 5 per month (Table 9.1). For example if a worker borrows 1,000 Taka / Dollar with 10 percent interest rate, he will have to pay 1,100 Taka / Dollar in total for one month and thus for one year he will have to pay 2,200 Taka / Dollar in total. On average, 19.23 percent of economic cost of a migrant came from land property (selling or mortgaging). Detailed data shows that only 24 per cent of returnee families had no land but after migration 42 per cent of them had no land (see Table 9.7).

Most of the cases workers needed five to six months and even one year to migrate to Singapore after paying money to agents. Thus some returnees had to pay a handsome amount of interest of their borrowed money even before their migration to Singapore. Some of the money-lenders were from district-city who had a long tradition of money-lending business within this district and some were from the own village who were not traditional money-lenders but were engaged in this business temporarily for making some money<sup>4</sup>. Previously, money-lenders were used to lending cash money to the peasants and businessmen in the slack or cropping season. However, for the last few years, they have broadened their horizons to include potential migrants and gradually potential migrants have been their major targets. Moneylenders are locally called '*Mahazon*'. It is obvious from the data that the outflow of funds was substantial and this outflow affected the size of land holdings as well as all forms of savings of families.

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Five for details.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed discussion is presented later in this chapter.

## Recruitment

Conventional wisdom that migration can export poverty and unemployment has been called into question in the context of Hoglekandi. In this section, I will explore the effects of emigration on employment and production at Hoglekandi by first looking at the overall employment scenario in rural Bangladesh. The argument here is that emigration may ease unemployment modestly but it does not offer a stable solution to the problem. The public sector is small and the bulk of the working population is in agriculture. Agriculture constitutes 63.9 percent of total civilian labor force while non-agriculture constitutes 36.1 percent (in 1996) (Statistical Pocketbook, Bangladesh, 1996). According to the 1991 census, 80.37 percent of population lives in rural area (Statistical Pocketbook, Bangladesh, 1996). In spite of the adverse ratio of land per person, the majority of population is engaged in agriculture. Persons who are principally agricultural laborers are not likely to be fully employed as such throughout the year. On an average they are generally employed 185 days per year, including 115 days in crop production and 70 days in other allied activities, which leaves 180 days free (Huq, et al. 1991:155). The laborers therefore require either high wages for agricultural work to carry them through the lean period, or additional non-farm jobs.

In addition, it is estimated that 85 percent of farm workers belonging to farms operating on less than 2.5 acres are surplus in the sense that they have to depend on other farms or other activities for their livelihood. Even farms operating on 2.5 to 5.0 acres and 5.0 to 7.5 acres, 12.11 percent and 2.35 percent of farm workers, respectively, are surplus (Masum 1989:22). Despite rich soil, ideal growing condition and potential and abundant supply of labor, agricultural yields are today among the lowest in the world. Present

average yields of rice are about 1.2 mt /ha, compared with 2.5 in Sri Lanka, and 2.7 mt/ha in Malaysia, which are climatically similar (Karim1992: 112). The level of landlessness or near landlessness and rural social deprivation is quite closely related in Bangladesh.

There is no reliable estimate of the extent of unemployment and underemployment. According to some estimates, 16 to 18 million people are unemployed and under employed (Ahmed, 1998: 372). Other estimates indicate that about 40 percent of the labor forces are underemployed (Asian Development Bank 1998) while 1.8 to 2.0 million people enter the labor force each year (Ahmed, 1998). Shamsun Nahar Ahmed (1998:373) estimates the total cumulative figure for Bangladeshi migrants until 1996 approximately 2.4 million. The figure for 1998 was around 3million (*Asian Migration News*: 1-15 Nov.1999). This cumulative figure does not imply the total stock of Bangladeshi workers abroad, as no figure is available for return migrants. This cumulative figure represents about 5.3 percent of the labor force, which is significant but no way an overwhelming large number. Given this situation, it can be concluded that the greater the rate of emigration, the greater the relief to unemployment pressures will be.

90 percent of returnees' families hinged primarily on agriculture and only 10 percent on non-agricultural occupations. Ironically, some families had no earning members. 36 percent of families had no earning members while 34 percent had only one member (see Table 9.2). This might be due the slack season. I have mentioned earlier that economic activities of the families were limited mainly to six months. Fieldwork was carried out at the slack period. Most probably this is why I have got a higher number of non-earning families. Again, the extent and nature of unemployment will be different at

Hoglakandi from that of a rice-growing village. It can be argued that the extent of unemployment will be higher in this region than a rice-producing region. Rice is produced usually more than once in a year. The impact of migration on agricultural production is an important consideration, especially in a situation where farming relies heavily on physical input in a predominantly hoe-and-cutlass technology. However, it is not applicable in the Hoglakandi case. Because of its huge surplus labor, emigration has hardly any effect in agricultural production.

In terms of patterns of employment of returnees, only 36 per cent of migrants were unemployed before their migration. However after migration, 92 percent were unemployed, 4 percent returned to their previous agricultural occupation and the remaining 4 percent had started small businesses (see Table 9.5). This higher percent of unemployment cannot be attributed solely to the lack of economic opportunities at Hoglakandi. In-depth interviews suggest that many of the returnees were not ready to do any work in Bangladesh. They frequently explained the local economic activities as degrading for them. I have argued this phenomenon before as well<sup>5</sup>. As migration is itself a status symbol, once someone has migration experience, it is expected that the returnee will no longer engage in rural work for their livelihood. Working in the community of origin would bring them shame and infamy. This has been true for some returnees from “*BaroBari*” (big or large *Bari*). There are twenty-three families in this ‘*BaroBari*’. Two generations ago, members of ‘*BaroBari*’ were very rich and influential. Although they are no longer rich now, they do have considerable influence in the village affairs. They enjoy higher status compared to many other *Baris* in this village. *BaroBari* is also famous for having a large number of Singapuries (migrants who visited

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter Four.

Singapore). As a Singapuri Bari, members of the *Bari* are subject to occupational restriction<sup>6</sup>.

## Remittances

In this section, I will explore the magnitude and use of remittances. I deem the economic cost of migration i.e. the amount of cash money that workers pay to the agents as an indicator to evaluate the overt economic benefits. I exclude the cumulative interest of borrowed money that gets double even within ten months and the economic effects of land and livestock dispossession that entail a heavy pressure on families' subsistence economy from the discussion not to belittle their weight but to pin to what extent the net costs outweigh the benefits. However, I have taken the highest economic cost (highest cash payment at the time of migration) from the data to assess the economic benefits. The highest cost of migration of a returnee was Tk. 250,000 (or US\$ 5,434). In terms of economic benefit, the study found 60 percent of returnees remitted less than Taka 250,000 (or US\$ 5,434) while the rest 40 percent remitted more than this amount (Table 9.3). This experience raises a question whether returnees were affected by the 97's Asian financial crisis<sup>7</sup>.

Returnees' years of migration ranged from 1991 to 1998 and many of them worked less than two years which is a breach of contract. I have found that 40 percent of returnees migrated to Singapore at the outset or mid of financial crisis that is between

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter Four

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Seven

1997 to 1998, but 38 percent were affected directly by the financial crisis in the way that their work permits were cancelled before two years and sent back home. The data on percentages of victim of financial crisis (38%) and unsuccessful migrants (60%) (60% of returnees remitted below their sunk cost as defined above) imply the fact that migration is no longer beneficial for the bulk of migrant population.

The areas of expenditure of remittances unveil the nature of returnees and their vulnerability to exploitation. The study has found that on average, returnees spent 52.41 percent of their accumulated remittances on loan repayment, 30.64 percent on family maintenance, and 8.60 percent on migration of relatives to Singapore (Table 9.6). The data support Urzua's (1981) description of survival strategy of migrants. The nature and composition of Bangladeshi workers, their status, and tenure of stay in Singapore match with the simple typology of migration given by Urzua (1981). Urzua (1981) on the basis of motivation classified migration into 'survival' and 'mobility' migration. Survival migrants are persons pushed abroad by the lack of alternatives at home; mobility migrants are pulled abroad to better themselves. Survival migrants are compelled to remit a big amount back home just to augment the living conditions of the family members left behind. And the data show that on average 30.64 percent of remittances were used for the maintenance of families. Maintenance of families was confined mainly to food and clothing.

These findings on the use of remittances in Bangladesh are different from Mahamood's (1992) findings. Mahamood used the 1985 and 1986 Middle East returnees' data to examine the use of remittances in Bangladesh (N=306). He found that on the average, 19 percent of remittances were used in building of houses, 15.25 percent

in purchase of land, 4.04 percent in business, 4.39 percent in repayment of loans, 8.86 percent in weddings, 3.34 percent in medical treatment, 2.07 percent in donation to relatives, 1.88 percent in education, 9.11 percent in fixed bank deposit and 4.69 percent in other purposes. These findings are incomparable with Hoglekandi experience on several grounds. Firstly, it was not a village-study rather a general study aimed at explaining the trend of use of remittances broadly. Secondly, it did not deal with the socio-economic features of the returnees that would say whether they migrated for accumulation or survival. Thirdly, the data are very old. However, it gives a scope to argue that the experience of unskilled migration in two major destinations in Asia, Middle-east and Southeast Asia, is a point of change<sup>8</sup>.

## **Returnees**

It is generally argued that contract migration can result in a net addition to the emigration economy's stock of human capital if the skills learned abroad contribute more to the home economy's development than the skills the worker would have learned at home (Stahl and Habib, 1991). In this section I will explore the economic role of returnees in local economy. Return migrants were mainly unskilled construction workers in Singapore. It will be unrealistic to expect any remarkable changes in their profession or in the pursuits of their economic activities upon their return. Summing up this argument, one can say, with Stahl and Habib (1991) that it would be naïve to expect that the work experience abroad will transform a poor rural peasant into a modern farmer, or a poor working class urban dweller into an industrial entrepreneur. The Hoglekandi

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<sup>8</sup> I think that the 'age of great honey pots' is over, especially for unskilled workers. . This is

experience unveils that 94 percent of returnees worked as unskilled construction workers or cleaners or grass-cutters and only 6 percent of them worked as skilled construction workers (see Table 9.2). The skill that the workers acquired during their stay in Singapore is hardly ever relevant or useful to village economy. Many of the returnees have showed reluctance to farming and intention for urban migration. Thus, upon their return, these returnees in place of being agents of socio-economic change, they have been onus for their families as well as for the village.

### **Money-Lending and Improvement of Quality of Life**

In-depth interviews at Hoglekandi reveal the emergence of two important trends: money-lending and improvement of quality of life. Money-lending has been widespread and profitable business in this migration-specific area. Potential migrant workers find it hard to arrange their big financial cost of migration. Consequently, they bank on the borrowing of money from relatives or moneylenders. Relatives usually do not charge interest. While the hidden interest for relatives is to get help in future migration of family members by money or information, the interest for moneylenders is to profit out of borrowed money. The terms ‘moneylender’ or ‘money-lending’ used in the literature are catch-all terms. Unlike most scholars, some (for example, Kropp et al. 1989) use the terms in a narrow sense (purely professional lender of cash only). By moneylender, I mean one who lends money for profit.

Money-lending business is not something new in rural Bangladesh; it is an age-old profession. Individuals borrow money for various purposes- from investment to consumption purposes- in rural Bangladesh. Recently, lending money for international migration has been a very profitable venture for several reasons. For example, when farmers borrow the money for agricultural production and they are quite sure that they can return it in the reaping season of crops. They can make a rational calculation for their borrowings. Thus, both the moneylenders and money-borrowers know how much they can profit from and how much they will have to pay for borrowed money respectively. Such a clear and almost certain situation, the extent of profit of moneylenders is very much determined. Moreover, money-lenders have some limitation to charge the rate of interest, that is, they can not charge much as interest. In case of international migration, money-lenders usually charge higher interest rates. Besides, they get extra benefits. Since borrowed money will be paid from the international remittance, which is almost uncertain in terms of duration, they usually get higher benefits.

Who are these moneylenders? Among the Hindus, there were some people who were traditionally engaged in money-lending business in this region. But, after partition of India in 1947 and more specifically after the liberation of Bangladesh 1971, the number of Muslim money-lenders started increasing while that of Hindu moneylenders started decreasing. Perhaps, one of the reasons behind this religious shifting is the changing demographic and political scenario of Bangladesh after independence. Ideologically, Muslims should not engage in money-lending business. Islam prohibits *riba*, the taking of interest. Its consequences on the economic life of some Islamic countries are such that Islamic Banking has been developed as an alternative form to Western banking. In spite of religious bar, money-lending among Muslims has been a

very rampant business in this district. The interest rates for borrowed money vary depending on the purposes of borrowing. If money is borrowed for consumption purpose like wedding interest rate will be low, and if for investment purpose like farming, the interest rate will be high. However, in this region moneylenders charge the highest interest rate for overseas migration despite the possibility of highest profit returns.

I looked into the villagers' perceptions on moneylenders. In some cases large-scale moneylenders who were from main district city, Munshiganj, were considered respectable, honest and often charitable persons, while ordinary small-scale village or peddling money-lenders were looked down upon. Many villagers portrayed them as systematically pushing their clients further and further into debt, and finally sucking them dry of money, property, and freedom. Some identify them as unreliable and irrational, but rational in respect to their usurious practices. Contrary to the negative perception, one should be aware that local people on the street usually hold an opportunistic, ambivalent attitude depending on their current relation to the lender. Borrowers who wish to take up credit or want an extension of their credit like to praise the noble characteristic of their lender and his business practices. It is common to place the exploitative practices of moneylenders on the border between moral economy and market economy.

Now money lending business is not a monopoly business and dominated by a few number of traditional money-lenders. Many of the families at Hoglekandi were casually engaged in this business. Some villagers informed me that there were around hundreds of villagers who were regularly lending money for migration purpose. Since money-lending is a very risk-free business and easy to handle, many of the rural families find it very

easy way to secure higher profit, the profit that an individual cannot earn from other businesses. The relationships between the lenders and borrowers are sometimes conflicting but it is also sometimes harmonious. Borrowers see the lenders as someone to whom they are indebted. As a result lenders get privileges from one section of the society and they remain considerably influential at the *Bari / para* level. Money-lenders are not always interest-hungry people. I have found in several cases that they have reduced the charge of high interest after the thorough assessment of the borrower's economic condition especially when the migrants failed to reap the benefits from migration.

I have observed the attitudinal changes among the migrant families. This has relevance to the health behavior of the families. According to population census 1991, 3.89 percent of families in rural Bangladesh have sanitary and semi-sanitary toilets and the rest 96.11 percent have traditional ones or none (Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1996). In my study, before migration 14 percent of families had sanitary and semi-sanitary toilets and the remaining 86 percent had traditional ones (Table 9.8). After migration there is a remarkable positive change in patterns of toilets. 32 percent of families possess now sanitary and semi-sanitary toilets and the remaining 68 percent still have traditional ones. Data on the changing patterns of toilet facilities have been presented here with a connotation to report the attitudinal changes of migrant workers.

Many of them frequently talk about the law and order, transportation, value of work, discipline, cleanliness, and political culture of Singapore and they compare those with Bangladesh. One can easily trace out who is a migrant worker and who is not after having a brief talk. The way they think, the way they express the ideas differ

remarkably from the non-migrants. One of the workers' comments on 'importance of women's social security in Bangladesh' is noteworthy here "if a government can not guarantee women's social security, it can not guarantee nation's economic prosperity" (Translated from Bengali). This is positively stemmed from his social experience in Singapore.

### **Remittance, Marriage and Migration**

Anyone who gets married today spends a huge amount of money. Since many migrants come back from Singapore with a lot of money, the possibility of marrying educated and pretty girls increase for them. Again, when I migrated, one of my sisters who was at marriage age received better proposals from outside village and we married her off by spending a good amount of money. I paid money for her marriage. When I came back home, I could not save much. So I did not marry this time. I will marry next time when I will come back from Singapore..... A marriage involves a big amount of money and I cannot hope to get a good bride (educated and pretty) without spending a good amount of money.

(A remigrant, 27 years old, unmarried)

In this section, I turn to migration and its interrelationships with cultural dimensions of marriage (Tambiah and Goody, 1973; Comaroff, ed., 1980). As the educated wife (*shikhit bau*), is a sign of a family's high status, girls with a formal education are desired brides. But these are far more expensive than a 'poor and

uneducated girl' and therefore migration is all the more necessary if one wants to marry a 'suitable' bride. The payment of the dowry and bride price is an indispensable condition for a marriage in the village, yet the quality and quantity of these bridal rights have changed considerably over the last years. Villagers in Hoglekandi often see the reason for this recent development in migration. Migration and marriage in Hoglekandi seem to be linked in a kind of vicious circle: without migration, marriage is not possible, but at the same time migration and the ensuing monetization have caused a dramatic rise in bride prices<sup>9</sup>.

'Inflationary' tendencies are observable not only with regard to the bride price, as today an ever-increasing number of assets are needed as a precondition for marriage. The similar trend is found in Pakistan as well (Lefebvre, 1999). Amir Ali was 28 and a returnee. He was from *Borobari* (big Bari), holder of a BA degree, married an educated girl by offering gold ornaments of cash value approximately Taka 90,000 (approximately SG\$ 3,000, 180 gm as he could bring highest 200 gm gold without tax). His spending on his marriage was well-known to the members of the *Borobari*. He was educated and he married a girl with higher educational qualification and family background. This consolidated the high status for him and his family. The most important mark of an educated bride is the amount of gold<sup>10</sup> she gets, thus making remittance spending even more important.

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<sup>9</sup> For details about Dowry and bride price, see Tambiah and Goody (1973)

<sup>10</sup> Gold is a status symbol. Gold is an inseparable element in the marriage ritual in Bangladesh. There is hardly any marriage where gold is not offered to the bride for use. The amount of gold offered to the bride is an indicator of bridegroom's socio-economic status and the ability to marry an educated and pretty girl. People talk about it even when the marriage ceremony is over.

“In former times, bridegroom’s family bought some cosmetics, clothes and basic gold ornaments for a bride. The mattress, cushions and covers were made from local cotton. A bridegroom got a watch, clothes and a gold ring at best. That was all one needed. It did not cost more than several thousands Taka. In former times people did not have a dining room, they did not even know what it was.... Today we need the furniture for a whole sleeping room and for a living room. Demands for television and some cases also refrigerator are very common here. How much money does one spend for gold ornaments? Does the bridegroom have a renovated house or a new house? These are some relevant questions one must consider before marriage in this region. This is not applicable only in the case of getting married but also marrying off sisters. Thus, the nonmigrants here face real problems”.

A remigrant, 29 years old, married

Thus, it is very clear that marriage has become one of the obvious vehicles for the introduction of modern life-styles into rural society. This is already apparent during the marriage ceremonies and festivities. All the marriage preparations, of course, force expenses up and have to be covered by remittance spending.

Another instance of the impact of migration is the gradual breaking up of the family’s traditional power structure.

In former times, the bridegroom’s father or grandfather chose the bride he was to marry. When the grandfather was still alive he had the last

word because he was the senior person in the family and everybody had to listen to him. At that time, the father paid for everything, because the money was in his hand, and he also had his son in his hand because he was living with him before and after marriage. The father decided what the son had to do. Today things have changed. Many migrants choose their bride on their own. They no longer listen to their parents. A migrant can choose a girl even if she is not from the family of higher status or even if she is from another village. He is free because he pays the marriage expenses on his own. When the migrant wants a different girl to the one his parents have chosen, then he says to them: 'if you do not agree, then I marry her all the same' and then the parents have to give in.

A village man, Hoglekandi

The above statement shows how sons who have got hold of substantial sums of money through migration are today able to ignore their fathers' hitherto unquestioned authority. Parents are no longer the sole holders of economic assets and the only persons with the privilege of decision-making. The father's right to choose a daughter-in-law according to his own interests – for example, in an additional input of labor power and source of cash – has gradually been questioned because migration has given sons an economic position independent from their fathers. It is evidently a side effect of monetization which gives the young migrants the chance to 'revolt'. Possessing his own source of cash, the migrant son claims for himself the right to choose. Probably the young generation's wish to realize its own aspirations against the will of parents has

always existed, and it is only through migration that they have gained the economic power to have their own, independent way.

## **Summary**

This chapter paints a sobering picture of effects of emigration on Hoglekandi. Temporary labor migration has not fuelled the local economy from an external pipeline of remittances rather it drained on the local resources thus impeded the development of local economy. It is a reflection, in motivation and outcome, of the conditions in the sending community. It upholds the ‘development asymmetric hypothesis’ that labor migration increases inequalities or differences between sending and receiving countries rather than diminishing them, as the ‘balanced growth hypothesis’ suggests. It acknowledges the paramount importance of migrant networks that have brought peasant communities and families into direct contact with international capital. It also bespeaks that migration with all its facets can be understood only when it is placed in its human and geographical context.

This chapter has shown that the majority of small peasant families are not able to reach a permanent and decisive reorganization of their family economy. Remittances are not enough to purchase a sufficient amount of land to secure production for consumption, thus enabling them to reach at least relative autonomy from the market. Neither can they establish a small ‘off-farm enterprise – for example, by buying a taxi which earns them enough cash to guarantee the family’s survival. What is possible instead is investment into the improvement of living conditions: scarce living space can be

enlarged by building a new house or additional rooms, clothes, nutrition and medical treatment can be bought, a marriage can be arranged. When remittances run out 'everybody is where he started from' as one village man stated. The Hoglekandi experience reveals the class-character of labor migration and shows how the vested interest groups (the propertied and money-lending groups) are using international labor migration as a mechanism for uprooting the landless and near landless people from village economy. It is these interest groups who are appropriating the fruits of emigration and fattening on the labors of temporary workers. Thus temporary migration is neither capable of correcting the underlying weaknesses of socio-economic structure of rural society nor can it provides a substantial and sustained impetus for the socio-economic transformation of rural economies.

## Tables and Figures

Table 9.1 Background Data on Hoglekandi, 1999

<b>Description</b>	<b>Hoglekandi</b>
1. Area	4 Square km. (Around)
2. Population	2,600 (Around)
3. Number of Families	350-375
4. Number of Migrant Workers	225-235
5. Cultivable Land remains under Water	From May to November
6. Main Source of Income	Potato Farming
7. Number of Cropping	One (Potato)
8. Average Yield for 30 decimal land	20 –25 Metric Ton
9. Cost of Potato Production (For 30 decimal land)	Tk. 40,000 to 50,000 US\$ 800 to 1,000
10. Profit from Potato Production (From 30 decimal land)	Tk. 90,000 to 120,000 US\$ 1,800 to 2,400
11. Other economic activities	Fishing, Day-laboring Rickshaw- Pulling
12. Mosques	4 (Brick-built)
13. Primary School	1 (Brick-built)
14. Madrassa (Religious School)	1 ( Tin-sheet)
15. Main Communication within Village (May to November)	Boat
16. Communication with District-city	Paved Road and Boat
17. Natural Hazards	Flood-prone area

Table 9.2 Socio-Demographic Data on Families and Returnees  
Hoglakandi, N=50, 1999

Type of Family	Percents	Educational Attainment Percents	
Nuclear Family	24	Illiterate	4
Extended Family	76	Primary (5 years of schooling)	84
		Secondary (6 to 10 yrs of schooling)	10
Total Members of Family		Higher Secondary	0
2 to 3	10	Tertiary (12 to 16 years)	2
4 to 6	42		
7 to 9	22	Sources of Earnings of Families	
10 and above	26	Agriculture	90
		Non-agriculture	10
Age Structure of Returnees			
20 and Below	10	Present Earning Members at Families	
21 to 25	34	None	36
26 to 30	24	One	34
31 to 35	20	Two	14
36 and Above	12	Three	14
		Four	2
Migration Experiences of Members of Families		Years of Migration of Returnees	
One Member	72	1998	6
Two Members	20	1997	34
Three	6	1996	36
Four	0	1995	16
Five	2	1994	4
		1992	2
		1991	2
Marital Status of Returnees			
Married	64	Nature of Work of Returnees in Singapore	
Unmarried	36	Unskilled (Construction, Cleaning, Gardening, Grass-cutting)	94
		Skilled	6
Rates of Interest of Loan taken by Returnees meeting costs of Migration		Length of Stay of Returnees in Singapore	
2 to 5 percent	6	Below 24 Months	38
6 to 7 percent	18	24 Months	56
8 to 9 percent	32	48 Months	6
10 to 11	16		
Non-borrowers	28		

Table 9.3 Financial Costs and Benefits of Migration, 1999  
Returnees' Survey, Hoglekandi, N=50

<b>Economic Cost of Migration</b>	<b>Percents</b>	<b>Financial Benefits Received</b>	<b>Percents</b>
120,000 to 180,000	18	Below 180,000	36
180,000 to 200,000	22	180,000 to 220,000	16
200,000 to 220,000	58	220,000 to 250,000	8
220,000 to 250,000	2	250,000 to 350,000	20
		350,000 to 450,000	8
		450,000 to 750,000	8
		Above 750,000	4

(US\$ 1 = Taka 46 in 1996, 48 in 1998, 50 in 2000)

Table 9.4 Sources of Collection of Economic Cost of Migration,  
Hoglekandi, N=50, 1999

<b>Sources of Collection</b>	<b>Average Contribution to Migration Cost (%)</b>
Money-Lending	51.39 Percent
Land Property (selling/ mortgaging)	19.31
Other Sources (savings of families, Loan from relatives, selling livestock and gold)	29.30

Table 9.5 Patterns of Employment of Returnees, 1999  
Before and After Migration, N=50

<b>Areas of Work</b>	<b>Before (%)</b>	<b>After (%)</b>
Agriculture	58	4
Unemployed	36	92
Odd Jobs (rural Market)	6	0
Business	0	4

Table 9.6 Patterns of Uses of Remittances of Returnees,  
Hoglakandi, N=50, 1999

Areas of Uses of Remittances	Average Remittances Used (%)
Loan Repayment	52
House-Making or Renovation	2.59
Maintenance of Family	30.63
Payment for relatives' migration	8.60
Crop production (potato)	1.32
Business	1.52
Other Purposes	2.64
Savings	0.28

Table 9.7

Effects on Patterns of Land-holdings of Families, 1999  
Returnee Survey, Hoglakandi, N= 50

Average Land-holding of Families		
Before Migration	After Migration	Percents
57.69 Decimal	Nil	18
42.55 Decimal	33.80 Decimal	50
37.5 Decimal	88.5 Decimal	8
Nil	Nil	24

Table 9.8 Nature of Latrine of Returnees' Families,  
Hoglakandi, N=50, 1999

Nature of Latrine	Before Migration (%)	After Migration (%)
Sanitary	8	16
Semi-Sanitary	6	16
Traditional	86	68