Cultural Experiences and Challenges for Resettlement among Bangladeshi Return Migrants

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Abstract

Return migration, a significant part of migration cycle, becomes growing concern to study both by the academicians and practitioners because of its major impact of financial flow and ability to enhance cultural and social capitals in the home country. But return to the home country is not just a matter of individual decisions rather having many social and cultural experiences and challenges for the return migrants. In this situation, the present qualitative research has taken the account of return migrant's point of view on resettlement and social integration in their home country.

Based on ethnographic research conducted among Bangladeshi return migrants in Satkhira district, this paper demonstrate the sociocultural experiences and challenges faced by them for the permanent resettlement. The result revealed that for permanent

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resettlement they are treated as newcomer in the home country and have to come across with the liminal phase as most of them act as 'comers and goers' between home country and foreign country. It was also revealed that they have to cope with the local livelihood opportunities by transferring their skills independently to match with the local livelihood opportunities. Finally, most of the return migrants have to change their professions.

Introduction

Few years ago, Return migration had been considered as "the great unwritten chapter in the history of migration"(King 2000:7) Some researchers addressed the cause as structural invisibility of return migration. On the other hand, Pîrvu & Axinte noted the cause as most research resources are located in highly developed countries, while most returnees return to developing countries (Pîrvu & Axinte. 2012). However, the issue of return migration has recently been receiving increasing attention in the migration literature. (de Haas, Fokkema & Fihri 2015).

Very interestingly, most of the studies of return migration take an economic point of view and the subject matter of study is limited to causes of return, welfare, and development relation. Many economists believe that individuals migrate to increase their welfare (Borjas 1989). For most migrants, the primary alternative to staying in the host country is to return to their country of origin (CO) (Nekby 2006). According to neoclassical migration theories, return migration is a failed attempt at the migration project (Cassarino 2004.But few studies also denoted the significance of non economic factors

motivation factors. (e.g. Wang and Fan, 2006; Dustmann, 2003).

Anthropologists have studied migration from different perspectives. For example, Physical anthropologists think migration as old as emergence of hominids. Hunters and gatherers are the evidence of mover from anthropological archaeologist's point of view. Later, anthropologists focused on internal and international migrants to study networks and social capital (cf. Brettell 2008). Cultural anthropologists also turned their attention on question of identity, structure, and agency to study migration. In addition, many medical anthropologists addressed medical system of country of immigration, immigrant's experience of stigma of particular disease like HIV-AIDS. There were many studies on migration by the anthropologists but still a trifling effort.

Migration is a common phenomenon all over the world. Almost all countries of the world are taking part in the migration process in some kind of means; some are participating as sending countries, some as receiving, and others as transit countries. In Bangladesh, migration is considered as 'obvious development alternative of economic emancipation' and 'vital livelihood strategy'. Bangladesh is actively participating as officially sending country from 1976. Islam (2010) stated that Bangladeshi migrants are spread over five continents in more than 120 countries and major countries of migration are Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Malaysia, Singapore, Libya and Lebanon. Destinations for women migration from Bangladesh are UAE, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Mauritius, Maldives, etc.

Return does not inevitably mark the end of migratory cycle. It is meaningful concept and social practice for mobile people. This research investigates the social and cultural experiences in the web of permanent settlement among the return migrants in Kuskhali village in Satkhira district in Bangladesh. Through a fine-grained ethnographic account of the returnees we show what social challenges they faced in their local culture. In addition, the investigators analyzed social origin of these challenges.

Methods

In order to address these research questions, this study employs the classic anthropological technique of participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson.1995), expanded by tape-recorded, semistructured, in-depth interviews with neighbours and relatives of the return migrants in Kuskhali village in Satkhira district in Bangladesh. Because the study question links to exquisite forms of symbol, assumption, and meaning that are often difficult to assess with quantitative methods or interviews alone, this study makes use of the anthropological research methods utilized over the long term. Anthropological methods are critical to investigating social experiences without simplifying the complex reality in which they are embedded. In particular, participant observation involves long-term engagement in a particular social and cultural context. The researcher participates in everyday life during the fieldwork done from January 2018 to June 2018, while observing interactions and listening to conversations in order to identify significant practices, economic forces, and cultural concepts. The investigator regularly records events and conversations in detailed field notes.

Tape-recorded interviews were conducted with five members of each of the groups of primary study participants outlined in Table 1, Interviews were conducted by the investigator in Bengali.

Table : 1 Primary study participants		
Participants	Location	Descrition
30 return migrants	Satkhira district Kuskhali village	25 Male 5 Female
20 relatives and neighbours of the migrants	Village name	10 Male 10 Female

Sources: The Authors

The participant sample was selected in order to weigh up the demand for the natural development of relationships within participant observation and the desire for a representative sample. The selection of participants on the satkhira district will serve as an example. First, the district was selected for the study because it contains migrant populations. According to Islam (2010) in Satkhira district total 10483 people were migrated from 2005 to 2008. Second, the investigator was able to build rapport with the migrants of this village due to his prior acquaintance with several residents.

More than 1,000 pages of field notes from observations and experiences, oral histories and transcribed interviews, as well as photographs, surveys, newspaper and other media clips comprise the data analyzed in this study. A general overview of the initial stages of data analysis is provided by

the model of grounded theory (Strauss, & Corbin.1990), which can be particularly useful in participant-observation studies.

Fieldwork notes and transcribed interviews were coded utilizing Atlas.ti software. The analysis process includes coding of data through cycles of increasing accuracy. The data with a single code were compiled and analyzed for their characteristics and meanings. Then, data were coded axially, focusing on connections among categories. Data analysis also implied triangulation, a research verification technique that involves collecting several kinds of data from the same sources over time. The identity and research aims of the investigator were made clear throughout the fieldwork. Moreover, names and identities of study participants have been changed without altering the nature of the data.

Finding and Discussion

Meaning, feelings and Adjustment to family

Home is considered as sweet home in literature. But from this research it is revealed that return migrants have to face many experiences in their home which is not sweet at all. They have to adopt with social and economic conditions of their home. In other words, they have to adjust in their own home. The decision of return mostly depends on their home conditions, parent's permission and wife's wish. As seen in the qualitative data above, family structure also changed in case of few return migrants as joint family turned into single family. Complex relationship between family members also causes return migrants sufferings and challenges. The story of a return migrants Kishor kumar stated here as best example of family experience for

the many return migrants. Kishor Kumar said -

After reached at Malaysia, I became ill and about one week there was no improve and I really felt lonely there. I had lost ten kg weight and became skinny. Then I decide to go back in Bangladesh but my parents and elder brother thought that I made lame excuse to come back home. Moreover, they were unhappy as I did not send money to them. However, I decided to work hard and after few weeks I started to work with full phase and finally attended for overtime.

Three months later, I started to send money to my parents. Then they were really happy. Beside this, every month my parents and elder brother communicated with me over telephone. Specially my elder brother often talked to me and wanted money for different personal purposes.

But the things become worst after one year. I became ill again and lion share of my savings went to the doctor's pocket. Then, after eleven months, I came back to my countryside without inform my parents. I thought they would be happy to see me and would be worried about my health. But I proved myself wrong. Though I was sick, nobody of my family took care of me. Even they did not advise me to go to town for full check up of my body. They started to avoid me.

'My elder brother also took part in this game whom I loved more than my life and whom I helped more.' He said this loudly and repeatedly. He explained the situation-

"No one of my family gave a boiled egg to take

care of my health. They did not remember how much
money I spent for them. They even did not think
how hard I had worked for them only. I thought they
are my all but I was wrong. I was wrong indeed."

He continued,

I went to the Khulna town to visit the doctor. After getting treatment
and taking rest few months, I became healthy and strong. All on a sudden,
my father and my elder brother told me that I had wasted their money when
I went to Malaysia. They asked me to return the money. But they did not
take consider about my money that I sent from foreign. They outspreaded
in the village that I wasted their money. They also added that in foreign
country I lived an unhealthy life. Finally they started pointing me as lifeless
and futile. Then, I was really shocked and decided to sell my land property
to my elder brother and settled in Satkhira district. My only purpose was to
stay away from my family.

However, He concluded that "They did not love me at all, they loved my
money".

Prejudices, Stereotype and Metaphor

The sociological approach to stereotyping views stereotypes as fundamentally
incorrect and derogatory generalizations of group traits, reflective of the
stereotyper's underlying prejudices (Adorno et al. 1950) or other internal
motivations (Schneider 2004). Social groups that have been historically
mistreated continue to suffer through bad stereotyping, perhaps because the

groups in power want to perpetuate false beliefs about them (Steele, 2010). In the present study, it is revealed that stereotype has been a very large part of this rural society. Return migrants have been subjected to stereotyping in many ways. In some cases it is directly involved where as in some cases it is indirectly involved.

Commonly, return is treated as negative point of view and return within a short period treated with negative aspects such as 'failure', returnee treated as 'lazy person'. On the contrary, return after a long period is treated as succcess and the person is treated as 'clever'. In an interview a return migrant Sahjahan said,

> I was working in the village as a labour in the crop field. Sometimes I had lot of work but in the rainy seasons and hot summer days there was no work for me. But I had to eat regularly. One day a smuggler of my village said that he would send me India and there was no problem to get work for me. After few days, I went to India with that smuggler. Very few people knew about my that journey. I stayed there one year with many problems. However, after one year I return to my village. Here, everything what happened with me was wrong .people saw me as a criminal. Everytime they suspected me. After returning they treated me as failure also. Even, they did not give me work in their crop field.

In an another interview a returnee named Shohid who lived in Saudi Arab described that after twelve years when he could not fulfil his economic satisfaction properly he started planning to come back to the country. But it took more than two years to come back to the country due to parent's desire. In the last two years he had sent lot of money to his parents. Even he could not pay proper attention to his wife and daughters. He planned to settle in the village and started new business. Therefore, he saved some extra money and during return time he did not come with any jewellery and luxurious items for the family members and relatives. Few days passed and he realized that many of his family members were unhappy with his activities. They blamed him that he became 'stingy person'. His parents and other relatives started to avoid him. Ultimate result of this incident was that they separated from the joint family and started in a single family with his wife and daughters.

Though there were many different stereotypes and metaphors employed by the interviews to make sense of the returnees and stayees, one of the most prevalent involved perception of character among the returnees from different countries. In a simplified way it can be seen as below

Groups	stereotype
Return from Saudi	Pious, honest
Dubai and middle east	rich
Return from India	Poor, bad character, like us, alcoholic, may have another wife

Source: Field notes

Finally, stereotypes of return migrants —e.g., that the men are alcoholics and they have another wives, bad man, returning from Saudi is honest,

returning from India means problematic—are supported by lenses that decontextualize the suffering and marginalization often at the root sufferings for the return migrants. This stereotype foments intermittent rumours and fear among return migrants which may turn them to the district area.

Now and then: changing behaviour and social norms

One respondent continued that one of the significant changes of the local area is its physical settings. Now, there are four tea stalls in this local. In this small village which was not seen before. Most surprisingly, almost all the tea stalls are situated in next to the house. Becoming very angry he said that though people said it teashops, these are actually '*Addakhana*' which means the haunt of illegal activities. He added that people from different areas used to come here and make noise. The shops started from the very morning and it continued till noon. After a short break in the afternoon it started again and kept open almost whole night. People usually took tea and smoke frequently. But newly added things were playing carom board at day and at night watching movie with full volume sounds which made uneasy environment for the residential. It was also revealed that sometime prayers cannot be offered at home due to the high volume of Hindi music. He also noted that sometime people watched pornography in these stalls which was main reasons for the young adult to be addicted.

He became astonished that the villagers did not protect of these activities though they were disturbed.

He added more, "I could not bear these activities. I protest these activities. After saying a little, they stopped music during the prayer time."

He continued that after talking about all these things, I became like a stranger in the society. I saw that except for those whose houses are in the vicinity of the shop, they are not having any problem. Some people started to say that I should not protest these and few tried to advise me to have patience. It was quite normal in these days. He said slowly "Having lived in Malaysia for so many years, I have never seen a Malayan do anything without a problem."

In order to further understand the cultural changes describe this research above, Julian Steward's theory of 'cultural ecology' proves effective (Steward1955p. 37). He assumed that within any one culture there is a complex feature that is more directly influence by the environmental factors. In other words, some environmental features have more impact than other on cultural forms. As seen in the qualitative data above , new physical settings have direct impact on the changing behaviour of the villager to the return migrants.

Returnees are assumed to be wealthy

After returning from Dubai, Nitai Kumar was really tired and stayed inside the house. After two days, he went outside the house to meet the old friends in local marketplace which was near to his house .However, on the way he suddenly met with his father's friend. He stopped and started conversation. The man said him without hesitation "Hello dear, I understand you came with lot of money. That's why you were hidden in the house."On the marketplace he met with friends and neighbours. Each and everybody asked him about when he would return Dubai and how much money he saved from Dubai. He shared with anthropologist "People of this village think that gong to the

foreign means earn lot of money without having any pain."

On the next day, He went to his cousin's house in the same village. They also asked him about the amount of money he earned. They advised him to invest in the local business and save the money for the future. But he replied that this time I did not come with lot of money and I had no money to invest in business. They laughed at him and answered that you did not want to share the information of money with us .they also had fun saying "you are very clever."

 On the same day, at evening he was taking tea and gossiping with his friends in the nearest teashop. The shopkeeper said him that the returnee had earned a lot, now it was high time to marry. He replied " I had not enough money at this moment and I tried my best to go to another country. The shopkeeper did not believe in his word, rather he replied silently "God himself cannot make satisfied human, how will you be satisfied." Rest of the friends did not reply at all which means they also supported his words.

Experiences of women migrants in the patriarchal society

Women migrants experiences with lot of prejudices in the research area. Woman migration is rare in this village. However, recently few women stated to move foreign country for the well being of the family. But after returning, women get back criticism from family and society, and even unwillingness of families to welcome them back to the society. Social stigma and mental torture is common as a result of patriarchy prevailing in this village. To explore the women migrants challenges and social situation we may look on the following case.

Shahanara, a housewife with two daughters, never thought in his life to go abroad as she used to stay only inside the home and household activities. She always thought about her daughter's future. She tends to save money for the family. On the other hand, her unemployed husband was very lazy and used to spend extra pocket money from the household expenditure. Therefore, there were disquiets in the family. Moreover, they were full in debt and they had to mortgage their land to maintain their family. In the meantime, her husband married another woman without her consent. Under this circumstance, the lady decided to go to Bombay in India as a labourer with his cousin.

After five years, she returns to satkhira, his home where she left his daughters and mother. But she was shocked with the behaviour of his known persons. She said, "This area is my known village as this is my father's house. But some of my relatives with whom I grown up also avoided me." She also thought that in Mumbai she learned Hindi language and sometime her close kins who were junior to her came to listen the story of India. They thought that her life in Mumbai was as colourful as watch in movie. They did not want to hear the struggling part of his life rather they want from her movie-like romantic story. She explained that every time few neighbours made fun of her and tried to address her as "bad girl". Oneday, She summarised the challenges she faced as returnee, stating:

> "One of my neighbours named Moina, came to me and sometime made phone call from my mobile which I brought from Mumbai. I did not ask her about the phone call. But one day, her mother came

to me and charged me that I spoiled her daughter through my mobile phone. She also alleged that her daughter's lover mobile number was in my mobile phone and I called him to marry. That's why, the lover lived in the next village did not want to marry her. She miscalled me as 'Mumbai ghata' which means bad woman."

After few days, Shanara realised and surprised that many other people thought her as a 'bad woman'. She continued the story of being stigmatized, as:

Oneday, I searched few labourers for harvesting in our fields.Most surprisingly, we did not get labouerer that day.It was really shocked for us and I asked Ataur,one of my familiarlaborer who last year worked in our field to know the reasons. Wihtout any hesitation he replied that I would not work in your field because people would also call me as bad.

Shanara also said that Within few months , many people started to give bad report on her which was really unbearable for her,her daughters and parents. Most stiking thing is that being worired about her daughter□s study and marrige, she left the village and resettled to the satkhira district area.

Livelihood Adaptation and challenges

Livelihood opportunities are very limited for the returnees in this village. When anthropologist asked what opportunities did you get after come back from foreign country? Most of the interviewees agreed that after saving money from they want to do business. Some interviewees said about investing in land and agricultural properties. Only few people said about fixed deposit in the government bank.

But starting business is not easy task for the returnees for various social and cultural reasons. Among many cases one important case is Mr. Shohid.

Shohid, a returnee from Saudi Arab, said to establish in business here is not easy in this village. He described his experience as-

> At first, I decided to set up cattle firm in the village. I talked to many relatives to lend me their land. But many of my relatives denied giving me land. Though one of my relative were agreed to give me land but he wanted a high price. I realised that actually they did not want to see me established. Some other people of the village thought that I came with lot of money and I did know the local price .So they also charged a high price.

> After that I decided to put up electric shop in the village. I rented a small electric shop. But few days later I found that people did not pay hard cash. Another important thing I found that they used to bargain the price. However, after one year

I financed a pharmacy because the price was fixed and there was no scope to bargaining. But many relatives and familiar village people came and took medicine without paying in hard cash. Moreover, when I asked them to give the price they replied "Are you becoming beggar? Why do you shout only for money? Did you not earn enough money from foreign?" Having all these experiences I decided to move his pharmacy to satkhira district.

Low skills, lower options

Another important social challenge for livelihood adaptation is low skill of the returnees. Many returnees said that went to the foreign as labour. So they have no other skills to use in this country. They also said that, in the foreign country they can do anything for money and they are highly paid for that activity. But in this village they cannot do such type of activities. One of the interviewees said

"There was no suitable work for me here as I worked as labour in foreign. Therefore, I deposited my savings on the bank and maintained my family through the interest."

Social categorizations of work

There are social categorizations of work in hat village. Most of the returnees treated as 'foreigner'. There is a social image in the village where returnees do not involved in any profession. In the fieldwork anthropologist met

with Moizuddin who lived in the village and returned from Malaysia. In Malaysia, he worked as labour in a construction firm. He summarized his experienced in village as:

> "After four years, I returned from Malaysia. Main reason of my return was my daughters' social security. From the very beginning of the return I searched for work in the village. Though I had some savings I was agreed to do any kind of work.
>
> Two weeks later, I informed that the local market committee searched a night guard for the market. I thought it was easily possible for me as the market was near to our house. Without thinking more I agreed and jointed as night guard. My wife was not pleased but I somehow managed her. But next month, I went to my father in law's house in another village. Then, my mother in law and other relatives said that as a foreigner I should not do this type of work. For my job, they had lost their dignity. I replied that you all knew in Malaysia I worked as labour but now you said about the honour and fame. They replied me "It is Bangladesh, it is not Malaysia. We have our rules and we have to maintain it." However, after that many people started to disrespect me and finally I had to leave the job."

Conclusion

It is revealed in the study that most of the rural migrates to the world labour market from developing countries like Bangladesh in search of a livelihood amidst family economic tensions. During the migration process, they came to the country and faced challenges such as unstable family relationship, lack of livelihood opportunities, unfavourable working environment, and cultural adaptation and became marginalized in their own culture. In the long exile life, the culture of the immigrant country is compared with the culture of one's own country. Meantime, social distances also created between returnees and stayees. It creates a cultural shock to the return migrants. A binary relationship between the return migrants and local peoples like "us" and "them" is seen in the research area.

On the other hand, livelihood opportunities become small to the returnees due to the lack of skills, social categorization of the work and myth regarding foreign images. In this context, almost all the return migrants forced to change their occupations.

Many return migrants choose business as a profession but do not get the same treatment as the best and expected buyer or service recipient abroad. Due to cultural isolation and lack of continuity in economic contribution, they are forced to leave their society and be resettled elsewhere due to lack of professional opportunities locally and change of means of involuntary earning.

Drawing on the ethnographic data above, this article will close with recommendations minimizing the social and cultural challenges in four

areas:

First, in order to understand cultural and social factor of return migrants, complex relationship between local and returned people, researchers must take into account the cultural context of migration. Quantitative and qualitative researchers must find ways to explore social determinants of migration, return migration and settlement .In Bangladesh, ethnographic research should use more to understand the holistic picture in migration issues.

 Second, Bangladesh Government should introduce a well defined policy framework for reintegration. Social determinants of reintegration should be included in the policy. Government should take preventive measures to tackle the structural inequalities and stereotype, prejudices especially for the return migrants. Moreover, socioeconomic conditions should be addressed for the return migrants.

Third, Social advocacy and supportive programs on returnee is timely demand. Database development for returnees should be ensured. Referral services for the returnees, partnership establishment with Go and NGOs should be increased in local level. Most importantly, undocumented migration should be give priority for documentation.

 Fourth, Social safety net programs should be introduced in village level. For example, building social network, establish social support group for the rural return migrants. Moreover, supportive package for the migrant's children and family members may be introduced.

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