

Dadana or Diaspora on Rural Odia Life

Mamata Rani Subudhi

“April is the cruelest month...” I was musing myself. This is the last week of April and the scourging heat is increasing day by day. The hostels of my residential tribal school are almost vacant after the annual examination. The school staff and few students are waiting to the bell of vacation. Sadhu, a thirteen or fourteen year old boy of class Eight came to me and asked whether he can stay in the hostel campus in holidays with the night watcher uncle? Sadhu is a S.T boy staying in this hostel from his class six. Usually in short holidays the hostels do not close and nothing happens to Sadhu, but this is the longest vacation and hostels remain closed. Last year also he stayed in holidays. Perhaps, for last two years, he has not gone anywhere. He has made hostel his home. Obviously I knew little about him; so I called him near and asked, why he is not going home? Whether he is an Orphan or anything like that? His face grew grim and pale. He replied that his parents along with his two younger brother and sister have gone for Dadana. Neither they have returned yet nor any news about them. So he has nowhere to go.

This is not only the truth of Sadhu. Many of my students might be suffering silently with this continuously growing cancer like trend. Dadana is a type of Diaspora in literary language. It means the movement or migration of people away from

an established ancestral homeland or people dispersed by whatever cause to more than one location. Saying in simple, this is the concept of migration from own hearth and heart land to an alien place in search of livelihood. This is not at all a new thing in our society. People migrate for different reasons in different times. ‘Diaspora’ originates from the Greek word ‘Diaspora’, which means “a dispersion or scattering”. Robin Cohen has classified Diaspora in to five categories i.e victim Diaspora, labour Diaspora, Imperial Diaspora, Trade Diaspora and Deterritorialised Diaspora. This Dadana trend of Odisha can be classified in labour Diaspora category. There are many causes for this Dadan Diaspora starting from social, cultural and economic. Undoubtedly, poverty is the main cause of this problem along with other peripheral phenomena. In our social system, there are some occasions in which a poor man is enforced to spend a lot of money beyond his capacity. That are the occasions like marriage and death rituals, and most appalling in the medical emergency. Dadan is generally seen among the lower level of people in social strategy. These people are not health conscious and so they are prone to any malignant diseases which propel them to spend a lot of money. In this time of emergency they go to village money lender who acts as an agent of Dadan unit. Once the poor

man receives money and sign the contract, he is trapped. Sometimes the contract is individually signed or sometimes taking the whole family in regard to the amount of money received. Then the scapegoat family with boxes and bundles go as Dadana labourer. Generally in Western Odisha, these workers are sent to Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Tamilnadu and Bangalore to work as daily labourers in brick factories and construction companies. This is also called human trafficking.

Few days go smoothly, but when time comes for wage or contract tenure, then things begin to upset. With few fortunate Dadans the things remain normal and they return home normally. But most of them become victims in the hand of middlemen or trafficker. The victims are not permitted to leave upon arrival at their destination. They are hold against their will through acts of coercion and forced to work or provide service, it may include anything from bonded or forced labour. The arrangement may be structured as a work contract, but with no or low payment or on terms which are highly exploitative. Sometimes the arrangement is structured as debt bondage with the victim not being permitted or able to pay off the debt.

Bonded Labour or debt bondage is probably the last known form of Dadana today. Yet it is the most widely used method of enslaving people. Victims become bonded labourers when their labour is demanded as a means of repayment for a loan or service in which its terms and conditions have not been defined or in which the value of the victim's services as reasonably assured is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt. The value of their work is greater than the original sum of money borrowed. The forced labour is another type of situation in which victims are forced to work against their will under the

threat of violence, destitutions, detention or some other form of punishment. Their freedom is restricted and a degree of ownership is exerted.

Almost every day the torture and exploitation of Dadan labourers are coming in newspapers. The story of these people have pathetic and heart breaking. The struggle and suffering is very high. These people are to work for more than twelve hours a day in adverse and life-risk conditions. They are not given full meals everyday. The living condition is not better than cattle sheds. And those who are with family their condition is more deteriorating. Women and children are more prone to exploitation and suffering. This is the normal picture. In exceptional cases, if anyone goes against the will or tyranny of trafficker then his life becomes hell. He is not given to communicate with own family, his hours of work increases, amount of food decreases and physical and mental tortures rise up. These type of people are restricted to return. They remain under the strict surveillance of the trafficker. In this situation if any fortunate is able to escape, then the news of detention come to the day light. Some people die in this bonded adverse life and few are brutally murdered. This savage news seldom come out.

And back in own village, the left out family members wait everyday for a safe return . Usually, these people leave their family members in village with the dream of a prosperous future as hinted by middleman. The wife, children, old parents live in village with abject poverty. In case, the whole family go out, the old parent or either of them stay alone in the deserted home in care of other siblings. So, the person in Dadana if goes missing or untraced otherwise dies —the sky falls upon the head and earth slides away under the feet of family members.

In the context of shrinking globe, we can not say this trend as a social evil, it is a necessity, but manipulated necessity. The root cause of this trend can not be totally eradicated. If we think of this, it would be like waiting to swim the sea after the waves stop. Therefore, to control the dark side of this, the government should chalkout plannings and in view of this, the Government of Odisha is taking steps to stop or control it. Alarmed at the growing incidences of Dadana, the State Government stipulates formation of Integrated Anti-Human trafficking Unit (IAHT) at different parts of the state. Collectors of all 30 districts in the State would get instant support to deal with the problem. The Panchayati Raj and the Labour Departments are also trying to provide works at village level'. Right to earn' has become a legal right in present condition today. Different schemes are working to provide employment to the rural poors. The Govt is also trying to curb the middlemen or agencies engaged in human

trafficking illegally. And the Labour Department is active in releasing hostage Dadans, if news comes. A lot of money is being spent towards village level employment generation.

Everything is going on: Plan, policy, programme, implementation and employment generation. But Sadhu understands nothing. He only knows that, he has nowhere to go in the vacation. He has no home.

I looked at him. He was in apology.

Reference :

1. Global Diaspora : An Introduction by Robin Cohen

Mamata Rani Subudhi, Lecturer in English, Govt. SSD, Charbhata, Dist.- Subarnapur.



Shri Surendra Nath Nayak, Deputy Chairman, Odisha State Planning Board attending the 77th Utkal Divas - 2012 jointly organised by Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Odisha, Kolkata Branch and Utkaliya Milita Manch, Kolkata in the Kolkata University Institute Hall on 01.04.2012.