

The Plight of Illegal Migrant Workers in South Korea: Loss of Inhabitant Cultural Values and Involvement in Internal Conflicts

Aminul Islam Sumon

Department of Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology, Chonbuk National University,
Jeonju 561-756, Jeollabuk-do, South Korea

Abstract: International migration, especially illegal migrant work and workers' human rights, is one of the most complex issues in the present world. In the beginning of the 1990s, South Korea emerged as a labor receiving country. According to the Amnesty International Report 2006, around 189,000 of 360,000 migrant workers are illegal in South Korea. The present research examines the various socio-cultural aspects of illegal migrant workers' work and personal life in the host society. Migrant people inhabit in a dual cultural schema, which makes their life complex. Sometimes it becomes difficult for them to maintain their cultural dualism. Findings of the present research show that migrant workers often ignore many of their inherited cultural attributes in the host country. Their inability to handle cultural dualism contributes to their predicament. Migrant workers are also found to be involved in conflicts with people of the same cultural backgrounds, which further complicate their life and exacerbate their security and wellbeing in their precarious life. The research follows a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. Three-month intensive fieldwork, formal and informal interviews and case studies of key informants are the principal techniques use for collecting the data. The research site is located in the Jeonju city of Jeollabuk-do province in South Korea. It is to be hoped that the insights generated by this research will be helpful in enhancing their human rights and improving their overall wellbeing in the host country.

Key words: Illegal migrant workers, cultural attributes, internal conflicts, South Korea

INTRODUCTION

International migration, especially illegal migrant workers' human rights is one of the most complex issues in the present globalized world. Inequality, injustice, harassment, oppression and denial of basic human rights are some common characteristics of the treatment that these workers receive in different host societies. Very often it is due to the lack of legal opportunity or the difficulties in obtaining legal status that render them illegal. The so-called illegal worker thus falls prey to injustice, torture and even death.

Often illegal migrant workers suffer from the beginning of their journey and also for rest of the life. If their hazardous and uncertain journey can take them to their destination, they begin a new life in a new culture and new reality. Migrant workers, especially illegal migrant workers, do such works as involve potential harm and risk of their health, safety, wellbeing and morality (Amnesty International, 2006). They work in unhygienic workplaces, unhygienic living conditions with poor salary and discriminatory treatment from their employers while

constantly being haunted by the fear of police harassment. Homesickness is a common experience in their predicament.

In South Korea, migrant workers and their human rights constitute a big socio-political issue now. Many national and international organizations have pointed out that migrant workers in Korea spend very hard times. Government policies are often responsible for the predicament of the migrant workers. Industrial Trainee System (ITS) is one such policy, which has paved the way for their exploitation in different ways in Korea (Christian, 2004). Under this system migrant workers are not entitled to privileges enjoyed by local employees. Although, migrant workers perform the jobs that regular workers do, the former are officially treated as 'trainees'. The Korean Government passed a new Act in 2003 (EPS Act) in order to address this issue, but the new Act can only minimally ensure migrant workers' human rights:

Despite the recognition of their rights contained in the EPS Act, in reality migrants continue to have little protection and very limited possibilities for obtaining redress for abuse (Amnesty International, 2006).

Thus migrant worker in Korea are engaged in hazardous jobs with low salary, different kinds of harassments, discrimination and lack of safety and security.

In spite of these sufferings of migrant workers in their host societies, statistics show that the number of migrant workers is increasing day by day. There was an estimated 176 million migrants worldwide in 2000, which increased to 191 million in 2005 (IOM, 2007). The main reason for their migration is related to livelihood. Their socio-economic condition in their own countries forces them to be a migrant, whether legally or illegally (Tasneem, 2003).

The present study found that very few illegal migrant workers were concerned about their vulnerable situation or their human rights in Korea, although they worried about their illegal status. They were haunted by the fear that any time they could be arrested by immigration police. If arrested, they would have to return home, which would bring more sufferings for them. This is because they had already lost their property because they had needed a big amount of money for coming to Korea. However, within an uncertain future which is full of difficulties, migrant workers also create their own sphere. They build up their communities and friend circles. Ironically, this new cultural and community experience adds to their predicament in Korea.

In the early stage of their migrant life, migrant workers completely devote themselves to earning money for their families left at home and maintain regular and frequent contacts with them. However, as they adjust to Korean culture, the amount of remittance that they send home decreases. This decrease in remittance transfer is accounted by the fact that workers tend spend more of their income on entertainment and other purposes. It is often found that migrant workers also get involved in various types of conflicts with their fellow men who are from the same society or culture. This internal conflict also adds to their insecurity and vulnerability in the host society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is based on interviews with legal and illegal migrant workers in Jeonju city and on secondary data on migrant workers. Jeonju is a cultural city of Jeollabuk-do province in Korea. Although, Jeonju is not an industrial city, various small and medium-scale factories are located in the north-west part of Jeonju, especially in Falphokdong area.

The study comprised both qualitative and quantitative methods and data. Qualitative data was collected through observational field notes and

interviews. Quantitative data, on the other hand, comes from interviews and various secondary sources such as journal articles on migrant labor and annual reports. The primary data was collected through three months of fieldwork—from June to August 2007.

Ten factories were selected for the study, where illegal workers were found working along with legal workers. The presence of migrant workers from the South Asian countries was the basic principle of selecting the factories for the study. All of the interviewed workers came from Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and India. The data for this study was collected using following methods:

- Observation in the working places.
- Interview with workers by checklist.
- Case studies of key informants.

BACKGROUND OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN KOREA

During the 1960s and 1970s Korea was one of the manpower exporting countries in the world. The Korean government tried to facilitate international migration and they established a special department for this purpose as early as in the mid-1960s. The Middle East, Japan, German, USA and some other developed countries were the favorite destinations for Korean migrant workers (Hyunho, 1991). The annual number of workers leaving for overseas work was less than 10,000 before 1972. During the 80s, however, an annual average of 148,000 workers left Korea for the Middle East. In June 1984 about 220,000 Korean temporary workers were employed abroad. Overseas workers made a significant contribution to the economic development in the 1970s and 1980s (Ro, 1986).

However, from the late 1980s the country turned into a labor force importing nation. Currently 642,000 foreign workers are working in South Korea. According to their status of sojourn, 202,000 workers are illegal or undocumented (Ministry of Labor, 2007). Almost all these illegal workers are employed in the so-called 3D (dirty, dangerous and difficult) industries including the small and medium-sized manufacturing and construction firms (Amnesty International, 2006). The number of the illegal workers is steadily rising, as migrant workers have played an important role in South Korean economy, particularly because of their contribution in certain industries. Migrant workers come from various countries including China, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal and West African countries.

After the 1980s Korean economy started growing very fast and it, was ranked 10th in the world in terms of GDP in 2004. Consequently, South Korea has become one

of the most attractive destinations for immigrants (World Bank, 2005). Corresponding to neoclassical macroeconomics theory, wage differences have forced workers from low-wage countries to move to high-wage countries. The former Korean economic development model, which had mainly emphasized quantitative growth, began to face difficulties after the emergence of an active labor movement in 1987. Strong unions and rapid changes in industrial relations challenged the stability of the Korean labor market. Although most companies had to contend with workers' demands for higher wages and improved working conditions, it was not possible to meet the needs of domestic workers and therefore Korean industries began to find labor substitutes (Choi and Choi, 2005).

The dramatic growth of Korean economy had an impact on native Koreans' socioeconomic conditions. They escaped from absolute poverty and became interested in the quality of work life. In this situation Korean labor force was not willing to do very hard work or 3D works in particular. The Korean Government successfully organized Asian Games in 1986 and Olympic Games in 1988, which made general Korean people confident about the economic prosperity of the country. Thus there was an acute demand of workers in Korean labor market and migrant workers were led to meet this demand since the natives were not interested (Dong-Hoon, 2000).

In the early stage, almost all migrant workers in Korea came on tourist or other short term visas. Because of the economic necessity, the South Korean Government overlooked and even encouraged, the influx of migrant workers through relaxation of immigration procedures after the 1988 Olympics. Moreover, Korean government was drawing up a formal policy to regulate migrant labor.

MIGRANT LABOR RECRUITMENT SYSTEM IN KOREA

As in many countries with new experiences of labor migration, in Korea there was, at first, no system of laws or regulations related to foreign labor; migrants working in Korea were, therefore, undocumented. Since then, the government has implemented several foreign labor systems in order to curb the rate of undocumented residence and employment while at the same time providing a regulated supply of temporary cheap labor to small businesses.

Foreign industrial trainee system: Industrial trainee system was established in 1991 for companies with overseas investment, which was expanded in 1993 to

apply to a wider range of small companies. Under this system, migrant workers work as trainees for a period of one or two years and then they are recognized as regular workers. The trainees were bonded to their employers and were provided wages as low as 600,000 won a month. Since the introduction of foreign trainees in the early 1990s, the Korean government has tried to control the number of legally admitted migrant workers under the temporary guest worker system. The basic idea behind the system is to use the migrant labor force selectively in industries where labor shortage has been identified and to ensure that migrants return to their country of origin (Donf-Hoon, 2000). More importantly, many of these trainees had run away the companies with which they had originally signed contracts and became unauthorized workers. This system was severely critiqued by the civil society because of its vast abuses of human and labor rights. The system also led to an increase of undocumented migrants in the country. Negative public opinion forced a change in the system.

The Employment Permit System (EPS): In 2003 the Korean Government started a new foreign labor recruiting system, which is called Employment Permit System (EPS). The EPS intended to give migrant workers legal status and to put an end to human rights violations. By passing the EPS Act, South Korea became the first labor importing country in Asia to attempt to protect the rights of migrant workers through legislation (Amnesty International, 2006). Under the EPS, employers who are unable to find a Korean worker to fill a vacancy can obtain a permit from the Ministry of Labor to employ a foreign national on a one-year contract. The contract can be extended to a maximum of three years.

FLOW OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN KOREA

After the 1990s, the total number of foreign residents in Korea has significantly increases in. Although Korea was a labor exporting country in the 1970s, within a short time it became one of the most desired destination for migrant workers in the world. Migrant workers come to Korea from over 100 countries. In 1990 the number of foreign workers was only 21,235 and about 50% of them were illegal (Table 1). Moreover, every year the number of migrant workers is increasing significantly. In 2000 the total number of migrant workers in Korea became 243,363. Statistics show that currently 642,000 migrant workers work in Korea (Table 2). That is, within seven years the number of migrant workers increased three times. Roughly, the number of migrant workers becomes double every year. Although, the Government started EPS in

Table 1: Flow of migrant workers in Korea.

Year	Total migrant workers	Skilled workers	Unskilled workers*	Illegal migrant
1987	6,409	2,192	0	4,217
1990	21,235	2,833	0	12,136
1991	45,449	2,973	599	41,877
1995	142,405	8,228	52,311	81,866
1997	245,399	15,900	81,451	148,048
1999	217,384	12,592	69,454	135,338
2000	243,363	14,697	74,787	153,879
2007	642,000	34,128	405,872	202,000

Note: * who are came under ITS and EPS, Source: Ministry of Justice, Annual Statistics for Immigration Control, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2007

Table 2: Number of migrants by their status of sojourn in 2007

Status of employee	Number of employee	(%)
Workers came under EPS (E-9 visa)	134,012	20.87
Professionals	34,128	5.32
Ethnic Korean (H-2 visa)	230,000	35.83
Illegal migrant	202,000	31.46
Others	41,860	6.52
Total	642,000	100

Source: Author calculation from the data of Ministry of Labor, Foreign Workforce Policy Division, 2007

order to fill up labor shortage in small and medium industries and to decrease the number of illegal migrant workers, the flow of illegal migrant workers has also increased alongside legal migrant workers.

Almost all foreign workers in Korea are unskilled workers. Very few of them are employed as professors, researchers, professionals or technicians. The number of foreign workers employed in skilled or professional jobs is 34,128. The number constitutes 5.32% of the total migrant workers and the rest are unskilled workers including industrial trainees or trainee employees and ethnic Koreans (35.83%) (Table 2). Most foreign migrant workers have the working status of industrial trainee and since the introduction of the Employment Permit System (EPS) migrant workers have come under this system. Most of the unskilled migrant workers are employed in 3D jobs.

Along with legal workers, as previously noted, the number of illegal migrant workers in Korea has also increased significantly. The number of illegal migrant workers has risen to almost 202,000 in 2007, which is comparable to the total number of legal foreign residents. With The Government introduced a temporary amnesty program in 2003 that issued five-year legal working status to illegal migrant workers. As an impact of this amnesty the number of illegal migrant workers fell to 130,000. However, after the end of this period, the number of illegal migrant workers is on the rise again.

HOW AND WHY A MIGRANT WORKER BECOMES ILLEGAL?

There are various factors that are responsible for the case of illegal workers in Korea. During the 1980s the

Korean Government encouraged foreigners to come to Korea and they simplified their immigration policy for this. As a result, a large number of people came to Korea on tourist or business visa, although their aim was to stay in Korea for employment. After entering Korea they started working as illegal workers. Some other people came on industrial trainee visa with legal status, but various circumstances pushed them to be illegal. Here a push and pull factor was responsible for an increase in the number of illegal workers.

Korea's tremendous economical development and labor shortage are the 'pull' factors. It is difficult for less educated or unskilled people, who are unemployed in their countries, to go abroad for employment in a legal way. Lengthy bureaucratic processes in both the labor-exporting and importing countries make the legal process of migration very difficult. Thus socioeconomic conditions push unskilled people to take decisions to go abroad by any means. Once decided, they make deals with brokers and they spend a large amount of money for traveling to their destination. In order to arrange this money, people usually sell their land property, or take loans with high interest rates from relatives, non-institutional money lenders or private agencies. This is attested by one key informant, Karim.

Korim, a Bangladeshi migrant worker, has been working in a factory in the study area for last six months. Since 2003, he has worked in several factories in Korea as an illegal worker. He came to Korea as a businessman, even though did not have any business in Bangladesh. He made a deal with a broker who arranged a business visa for him for 3 months. He had to pay 5 Lakh Taka (around 8000\$ USD) as processing fees. He sold his land property, but this was not adequate. He then borrowed one-third of the money from his relatives.

The Korean Government began to import labor force under its industrial trainee system. This system was a mechanism for labor exploitation. Although migrant trainees worked like other native workers, they were not treated as regular workers. Their salary and other facilities were minimal (Amnesty International, 2006). They earned even less than illegal workers. Thus the system encouraged them to become illegal workers.

Binoth is a 27 years old Nepalese who came to Korea under D-3 visa (industrial trainee) in 2003. He had 3 years contract, 2 years as trainee and one year as a regular worker. His salary was only 600000 Korean won and after deduction for insurance and others he withdrew only 540000 thousand Korean

won. Although he was supposed to work 8 h according to his contract, he had to do more than 12 h work every day. One of his friends was an illegal worker, who was doing the same job but had more facilities including earning than him. So finally he decided to change his work which the system doesn't permit. He thus became an illegal worker and during last 3 years he has worked in several factories as an illegal worker.

Twenty five percent of the illegal migrant workers found in the study area entered Korea on visit or business visa. Thirty percent of legal visa holders became illegal by changing their workplace. The others also stayed in Korea even after the end of their contract. Since there was no guarantee that they could earn a living on returning to their own country, they think that working as an illegal migrant was better than returning home. In this situation, after finishing their legal period of stay, they make their staying period as long as possible and become illegal workers. Some migrant workers have stayed in Korea for more than 12 years.

WORKING CONDITIONS OF MIGRANT WORKERS

A safe working environment is one of the most important human rights for all workers. The present study discussed some basic variables to illustrate the working condition of migrant workers in Korea which includes wage, working hours and workload, holiday, sick pay and leave, health, safety and job security. As these indicators show, migrant workers in Korea-whether legal or illegal-are suffered injustice and discrimination.

A significant number of migrant workers are paid less than the prescribed minimum national wage. Moreover, their pay was often withheld for a long period (Amnesty International, 2006). Average hourly wage of migrant workers was 71.4% of domestic worker. Domestic and migrant workers earn 5.6 and 4 thousand Korean won, respectively (Korean Labor Institute, 2003). However, in the study area, both legal and illegal migrant workers received 3.2 thousand Korean won on average. Illegal workers were earning more than the legal workers. Illegal workers, of course, seldom received their salary on time. They noticed that they couldn't change their workplace because factory owners owed them their salary for 6/7 months. Migrant workers had a minimum of other financial facilities such as yearly bonus, annuity. During national festivals of Korea, they received 50,000 to maximum 200,000 Korean won as bonus. However, a domestic worker receives more than four bonuses in a year and each bonus is the same amount as their basic salary.

Moreover, they get annuity on the basis of the working period, which is not available to migrant workers.

Rahman, 40, is a Bangladeshi illegal migrant worker, who came to Korea in 1995. He started his work at 300,000 Korean won per month. He has lived in Korea for 12 years. He has worked in various types of factories and different places during this period. When he wanted to change his working place, he had to leave 1/2 months' salary which was overdue. Better opportunity, immigration police, conflict with others forced him to change his job. Compared with past, he has received better salaries in the last few years. However, it is far less than that of a domestic worker's salary. In the present factory, he does 13 h night work and is paid 1200,000 Korean won. He has no weekend. He gets only one day off each month. He wants to change his job, but his 5 months' salary is overdue.

According to the Korean Labor Institute survey report 2003, migrant workers worked 11 h on an average and their salary was delayed by 7.2 months. In addition, 25.9% of workers interviewed did not get any recompense for overtime. In the study area, there were no migrant workers who worked 11 h a day and 5 days a week. Almost all of them worked 12-14 h a day and they had only one day off in a month. Illegal workers work at night and their working hour is longer than that of the day shift. They are not offered rest in their work, but their rest time is deducted from the total paid hour.

None of the workers have any government holiday except on the occasions of *schochok* and *sollal* (two big festivals in Korea). During these two big festivals, they had two or three days' holiday, although the actual holiday is longer for general Korean people. Hardly ever they get sick leave and compensation for physical injury at the workplace. Physical injury is very common in 3D jobs and most migrant workers are, as previously noted, employed in these jobs. If any worker is absent for sickness, they are not paid for that day. In the study area, there were workers who lost their fingers permanently and or who had other serious injuries. About 2,376 migrant workers had accidents in their workplaces in 2003, which increased from the previous year (Ministry of Labor, 2007). Very rarely they got any compensation for their injury. Illegal migrant workers do not have health insurance and medical expenses are very expensive in Korea. Although, legal migrant workers have health insurance, they can claim reimbursement only for a few problems. "Indeed, some irregular migrant workers who have suffered long-term or permanent injuries as a result of industrial accidents have reportedly been forced to

leave South Korea immediately after medical treatment as handicapped persons without compensation” (Amnesty International, 2006).

Actually all kinds of works done by migrant workers are hazardous. These works are called 3D works which Korean people are not willing to do. Generally, five types of work-related hazards are identified which include: Physical hazard, chemical hazard, biological hazard, ergonomics hazard and safety hazard (Sumon, 2007). All these hazards have harmful effects on the health and safety of workers both in short and long terms. Many workers are found working on very dangerous works for long hours. Often they do chemical works without safety equipment which are also very harmful and dangerous for their health.

A Pakistani migrant worker explains his situation. “I was working in a press machine since 2003. Last two and half years I am receiving treatment from Chonbuk National University hospital. I lost my two fingers of my right hand during the work. My company bears first few months of expenses for the treatment but I needed long term treatment and physiotherapy. Company didn’t want to pay more for my treatment and leaving expenses. I lost my fingers; I also lost all of my savings for treatment. Now I have to go back with empty hand and without my finger. My present company wanted to send me back. Last one year I am staying in a Mosque in Jeonju city.”

Migrant workers have no job security. Especially illegal workers are more vulnerable in this respect. They have no written contracts and are employed only informally. Although, legal workers have written contracts, it is in Korean language and very often workers don’t know the terms and conditions because of their incompetence in the language. The absence of job security makes them anxious because they can be sacked from their job any time without notice or compensation. On the other hand, migrant workers do not have the privilege to change their workplace by their wish. Not a single migrant worker in the study area was aware of his rights and working terms and conditions in Korea.

MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR LEISURE

“We are not human beings. We work like machines and earn money in Korea. We have no day off, holiday or leisure time. We get pleasure when after thirty days’ continuous work we get some papers which are called money,” a Bangladeshi migrant worker talked about his leisure time in this way.

However, during the working period more or less migrant workers get leisure time. Legal migrant workers have one or two days off in a week and they work 10-12 h per day. So they can enjoy it. In some cases, illegal migrant workers also get some leisure time. During their leisure both legal and illegal migrant workers participate in and enjoy various activities. Especially after their first year, almost all migrant workers get used to modern Korean culture. Nore bang (a small singing rooms just the right size for a few friends), dha bang (Korean version of coffee shops where a person can be entertained by a girl), disco and bar are very favorable places for migrant workers for passing their leisure. They pass their leisure time with Korean friends very rarely. Fellow country people are the most favorite partners for enjoying free time. They are also found enjoying their free time with migrant workers from other countries but never with Koreans. People who have girl friends in Korea, always spend their leisure time with them. Sometimes migrant workers get together and play cards. They also cook their national food and enjoy meals together.

A large number of migrant workers visit sex market and meet with sex workers during their free time. Mostly they go with their close friends and they try to keep their sexual life a secret, especially to their fellow country men.

MIGRANT WORKERS AND VARIOUS FESTIVALS

Migrant workers live in a dual cultural schema. One is their inherited national culture and the other one is the culture of their host society. Consequently, migrant workers have access to two types of festivals. All migrant workers have various festivals in their own society which are not similar to Korean festivals. In South Asian culture, religious festivals are the biggest. Moreover, most people are either Muslims or Hindus. Almost 90% Korean migrant workers have these two religious identities. Both groups enjoy two Eids (Muslim religious festival) and various Pujas (Hindu religious festival). These festivals are not familiar in Korean society.

Migrant workers cannot celebrate the festivals of their own societies. They never get any day off and weekly off days do not always coincide their festival days. They consider it a great gift if there is any such coincidence. If they have to work on their national festival days, they usually become very sad and feel homesick. They try to talk with their family members back home but it is hard to make a phone call on that day because a large number of migrants try at a time. If they fail to talk with family members, they become upset.

Migrant workers, who have worked in Korea for long time, have 1/2 time experience to get off day during their

festival. That time they invite their friends and enjoy various types of food at their home. Nowadays one country's food is available in another country. So migrants can follow their own food style and menu in the host country.

During the Korean festivals, migrant workers can enjoy days off from their workplaces. Korea has two big festivals and during these festivals Korean people get together with their family and friends, eat various types of traditional Korean food. However, except freedom from work, migrant workers have nothing special on these days. The day offs are also accompanied by festival allowances. Very few migrant workers have any opportunity to understand Korean traditional culture and festivals. However, like the young generation of Korea, migrant workers are also attracted to disco, nore bang and other activities which are very popular to present generation of Korea.

Some churches arrange some events for migrant workers during these two big festivals. They organize one-day trips for migrant workers and provide them with food. Sometimes migrant workers are not willing to attend these events because they think it is better for them to enjoy their time with their friends. In a year they get two only vacations so they want to catch up with friends who work in other cities. Some Muslim migrant workers enjoy the vacation differently. They go to another city for Tablighi Jamaat (a Muslim missionary and revival movement. Their activities are limited to the Muslim community itself) and spend time to reinvigorate their own faith and practice.

HOW MIGRANT WORKERS LOSE THEIR OWN CULTURE AND VALUES

The present study is focused on those migrant workers who are migrated from South Asian countries. Although South Asian people have different languages, cultures, traditions and ethnic identities, in a sense they have inherited similar cultural attributes at the broader level. They have strong faith on their own religious tradition as well as. There are various taboos existing in those societies. Extramarital sexual relations are strictly prohibited in Islam and also in Hinduism. There are also food restrictions in both religions. For instance, in Islam alcohol, pork and dog meat are strictly prohibited; even chicken, beef or mutton not slaughtered in an Islamic way are not acceptable to Muslims. Beef is strictly prohibited for Hindus. Actually sexual relations and food behaviors are sensitive issues in South Asian family and social relations. All kinds of sexual relations outside marriage and violations of food taboo are treated as sin in these

religions. Societal norms also discourage even to deny it (Bruce and Indrani, 1999).

Although, traditional Korean culture doesn't allow extramarital sexual relations, it is very common in modern Korean society. One study (Chin *et al.*, 1997) shows that among 352 respondents 44.7% had their first sexual experience with female prostitutes. During the 1970s, various kinds of entertainment industries began to grow up in Korea which incorporate industrial prostitution. Their services include restaurants, singing-room (karaoke) salons, room salons (adult bar with private room served by escort women), ticket coffee shops, steam baths, adult barbershops and massage parlors. But regardless of the type, prostitution is an important factor that maintains these facilities (Byun and Hwang, 1999).

Very few migrant workers follow their own socio-cultural and religious norms and tradition in Korea. After few months migrant workers become familiar with modern Korean culture and begin to enjoy various types of entertainment available. Those entertainment options are new and attractive to them. Both married and single migrant workers spend their leisure and money on them. Eighty percent migrant workers in the study area are found to drink in their home and 40% had the experience of visiting coffee shops and meeting female entertainers. There are no differences between married and unmarried migrant workers in this respect. Migrant workers frequently visit brothels because these places cheaper than other entertainment services. Some workers found in the study area who spend almost half of their income on entertainment and living.

Migrant workers who are in the first year of their stay in Korea send more remittance to their own countries than those who have worked in Korea for longer times, although the former earn less. The main reason for this is that new migrant workers are not yet familiar with modern Korean culture and various entertainment facilities so they spend less on entertainment and can save more money.

INTERNAL CONFLICTS AND REGIONALISM AMONG MIGRANT WORKERS

Migrant workers are found involved in internal conflicts, which is a crucial problem in their migrant life. Illegal migrant workers are more involved in these conflicts. The main reason for these conflicts are playing cards, affairs with female migrant workers or natives, efforts to obtain more facilities from the factory, misunderstanding with friends and so on.

If illegal migrant workers are involved in conflicts, they reach the point of complete ruin. They are threatened

or deported by immigration police. The participants of the present study noted that usually immigration police don't raid factories where illegal migrant workers worked, but if the police are informed they do raid and arrest illegal workers. Often it happened when two illegal workers were involved in conflicts and one of them informed the immigration police. After informing the police, the informant leaves the factory and so other workers in the factory encounter unexpected raid, arrest and more serious consequence. Sometimes verbal conflicts become serious and one is injured by the other. This situation particularly arises when they are involved in conflicts while drinking.

It is very difficult for a migrant worker to get a job in factory without cooperation and support of other migrant workers working in the same factory. There is a strong sense of regionalism among migrant workers which guides their behavior and its consequences. For instance, it is insecure for an illegal worker to search work physically because he could be arrested by the police. The job searcher in this situation receives information about job vacancy from other workers. Some illegal migrant workers spend several months without jobs, although their number is very small. This may happen if job seekers are from a country or region from where there are fewer migrant workers working in Korean factories. In other words, they do not receive job information and recommendation from regional network.

CONCLUSION

The history of migrant workers in Korea is no longer than three decades. Previously, Korea was a labor exporting country in the world. Within this short period large numbers of migrant workers have arrived in Korea. The flow of illegal migrant workers, as previously noted, is not less than that of legal workers.

Migrant workers are engaged in those works which are dangerous for their physical and mental health. Korean workers are not willing to do these hazardous works, which gave rise to labor shortage in Korea. Foreign workers have been incorporated into Korean labor market against this background. From very early migrant workers suffer injustice and discrimination. Insufficient wages, continuous salary withholding, long working hours, denial of weekend or days off, continuous night work, working without proper protection are some basic characteristics of working environment in Korea. Although accidents and physical injuries are very common incidents in workplaces, migrant workers hardly ever get any compensation for this. Illegal migrant workers suffer more than legal workers in this respect.

Migrant workers' sexual behaviors and their attraction to Korean modern entertainment culture are some of the causes of their predicament in Korea. Both married and unmarried, legal and illegal migrant workers are addicted to the newly grown entertainment avenues. These services are related with prostitution. Migrant workers spend their hard-earned money for these purposes. Migrant workers are also involved in conflicts with one another, which add to their suffering. This internal conflict often results in the arrest or deportation of illegal workers by the immigration police. Moreover, a strong sense of regionalism guides their mutual support and behavior. Without a good connection with people who came from a particular area, it is very difficult to get new a job for illegal migrant workers.

Migrant work and migrant workers' lives are very complicated and multi-dimensional. Without collective attempts of both the host and sending societies, it is not possible to ensure human rights of migrant workers. Along with government policy, creating awareness among migrant workers is very important to reduce the number of illegal migrant workers and improve their working conditions. Non-governmental organizations and civil societies can come forward and take initiatives in this respect.

REFERENCES

- Amnesty International, 2006. Republic of Korea (South Korea): Migrant Workers are also human beings. Amnesty International, AI Index: ASA 25/007/2006.
- Bruce, C. and P. Indrani, 1999. Continued high-risk behavior among Bangladeshi males. Resistances to Behavioural Change to Reduce HIV/AIDS Infection, pp: 183-196 .
- Byun, W. and J. Hwang, 1999. A study of industrial prostitution, Women's Studies Forum, Korean Women's Development Institute, 15: 211-230.
- Chin, K. N., Y.J. Lee, S.J. Park, E.I. Song and S.R. Kim, 1997. A study of married adults' sexuality consciousness and attitudes, Korea Research Institute for Culture and Sexuality Report, Seoul (abstract in English).
- Choi, J.S. and S. Choi, 2005. Social Work Intervention with Migrant Workers in South Korea: Micro and Macro Approaches. Int. Soc. Work, Sage Publications: London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi, 48: 655.
- Christion, K., 2004. Migrant Workers are Protesting and staging Struggles!!. International Sec, ETU-MB, <http://www.labournet.net/world/0401/korea3.html>.

- Dong-Hoon, S., 2000. Past and Present of Foreign Workers in Korea 1987-2000. *Asian Solidarity Quarterly*, 2: 6-31.
- Hyunho, S., 1991. Korean migrant workers to the Middle East. *Migration to the Arab World: Experience of Returning Migrants*: United Nations University Press, pp: 56-103.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2007. *Facts and Figures: Global Estimates and Trends*, International Organization for Migration, Geneva.
- Ministry of Labor, 2007. *Employment System for Workers of the Republic of Korea*.
- Ministry of Labor, 2007. *Foreign Workforce Policy Division, Foreign Workforce Import Plan*.
- Ro, K.K., 1986. Workers of the Republic of Korea returning from the Middle East and their families: socio-economic conditions and problems, U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Asian Population Stud. Series*, 79: 43-54.
- Sumon, A.I., 2007. *Informal Economy in Dhaka City-Automobile Workshop and Hazardous Child Labor*. *Pak. J. Soc. Sci.*, 4 (6): 711-720.
- Tasneem, S., 2003. *Migration as a livelihood strategy of the poor: the Bangladesh case*. Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, Dhaka University, Bangladesh, http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/docs/Dhaka_CP_5.pdf.
- World Bank, 2005. *World Development Indicators*. Herndon, VA: World Bank.