

A Study of Migration of Workers in India

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Abstract

In some regions of India, three out of four households include a migrant. The effects of migration on individuals, households and regions add up to a significant impact on the national economy and society. Migration can result in the permanent relocation of an individual or household, which we may term permanent migration. But if individuals migrate leaving their families and land and property in the area of origin, they may do so with the intention of reverting back to the area of origin. Despite the numbers, not much is written on migration within or from India and its considerable costs and returns remain outside of the public policy dominion. This paper reviews key issues relating to internal and external labour migration in India. It analyses the patterns, trends and nature of labour migration, along with the reasons behind inter-state migration and also from gender perspectives. At present, Census results for migration are available only till 2001, whereas NSS results are available till 2007–2008; hence much of our comparison is based on NSS results. All the studies are carried out based on census data 1981 onwards.

Keywords: Gender Perspective, Inter-state Migration, Labour, Migration

1. Introduction

Migration has become a universal phenomenon in modern times. In most countries, it has been observed that industrialization and economic development has been accompanied by large-scale movements of people from villages to towns, from towns to other towns and from one country to another country. Migration is defined as a move from one migration defining area to another, usually crossing administrative boundaries made during a given migration interval and involving a change of residence¹². India's long history of population and labour mobility, despite the large scale of migration in absolute numbers of people involved and labour migration has rarely been reliably studied because of labour migration is complex. The streams differ in duration, origin, destination and migrant characteristics. In India, three out of four households include a migrant, observing their economic and social impacts on migrants and their families are variable related to migration often involves longer working hours, poor living and working conditions, social isolation and poor access to basic amenities. In India Migration is strongly gendered,

with regional and class differences, thus structuring the potential of migration to be an inclusive force. Census and NSSO data show very low rates of female labour migration: between 70 per cent (in Kerala) and 94 per cent (in Bihar) of women in migrant households moved because of marriage (as primary reason), and at relatively young age mobility is thus much more limited than men's except when they move to join their husbands or parents. Since paternal norms that restrict the independent mobility of women vary across regions, caste, social groups, and educational levels and so on, we would expect these to be reflected in the data.

India, being a democratic nation provides basic freedom to the people, and so they can move to any part of the country, right to reside and earn livelihood of their choice for survival. And so, migrants are not required to register either at the place of origin or at the place of destination. Various factors determine the decision to move from one place to another - economic, social, cultural and political and the effects of these factors vary over time and place. Study of the inter-state migration or out-migration is significant from planning and policy perspectives of the government for proper allocation of

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the available resources. Singh¹¹ quoted that it is most volatile component of population growth and most sensitive to economic, political and cultural factors.

The current paper purports to give an overview of the key issues relating to internal and external labour migration in India. It analyses the patterns, trends and nature of labour migration, along with the reasons behind inter-state migration and also from gender perspectives. All the studies are carried out based on census data 1981 to onwards to latest available census report 2001 and hence data is based on NSSO surveys of various rounds.

2. Review of Literature

Migration influences the social, political and economic life of the people. The Patterns of migration change over time, for example, international migration has become much more common in most of the states in India. Certain reasons underlie the migration within the states or the outside the country. Regarding interstate migration reasons may be due to urbanisation, development in infrastructure, industrialisation, better job opportunities, for further education, marriage purpose, social destitution, etc. On the other hand it is common for migration out of the country, as people look for better educational infrastructure, higher human values and skills, influence by western culture, to say, people are seeking for higher standard of living. Literatures on migration studies found out the reasons underlying the issues of migration in terms of both the interstate migration or migration at the international level produce positive as well as negative impacts on the economy. A survey by Deshingkar et al.⁵ in Madhya Pradesh showed that circular migration had become more accumulative for the poor, as with reduced uncertainty of finding work, increased wages and decreased dependence on contractors, but bringing greater returns to those with skills or strong social networks. Internal migration is now realized as one of the important factors in influencing social and economic development of a developing economy like India. The increase in interstate migration particularly is also contributed by the expansion of transport and communication; it has become a part of worldwide process of urbanization and industrialization. According to the census of India 2001, it is found that 309 million persons were migrants based on place of last residence, which constitute about 30% of the total population of the country. The corresponding figures as per census of 1971 (159 million persons) shows that it

is double the number of internal migrants as recorded. This suggests that socio-economic changes in the last three decades have greatly affected the mobility of the population⁸. Under urbanization as a source of migration, Kundu⁷ estimated the contribution of net rural-urban migration along with natural increase, (net) population of new towns, and increase due to expansion of existing towns and merger of towns into them. He argued that the role of migration can be expected to decline further owing to the anti-migrant bias in some states and to the exclusionary urbanization policies being pursued. The study conducted by Bhagat and Mohanty² on the issues of migration is significant in terms of migration due to urban growth in India during the recent decades. Thus, their findings show the contribution of migration has increased during the 1990s. The National Commission for Rural Labour (NCRL) Report, 1991, suggests that labourers and farmers with little or no land have a high propensity to migrate as seasonal labourers. In terms of education, migration rates are high among both the highly educated and the least educated, while there is a preponderance of illiterates among seasonal migrants^{4, 6, 10}. These are some of the literatures surveyed on the issues of migration which form the fundamental framework for the analysis of the migration in India.

3. Data and Methodology

The data for the current study is based on the secondary source, various reports of Census of India from 1981 to latest available up to 2001. And as census data on 2011 regarding migration data is not available, the study is limited to census data of 2001 and 64th round (2007-08) of NSSO is taken to update the issues of migration¹. In order to find out the source of reasons for migration particularly, rural-urban migration data is based on NSSO rounds from 49th round (1993) till 64th round (2007-08). In order to bring the significance of urbanisation a prime factor of rural-urban stream migration, the study uses the data from Bhagat and Mohanty, and details are provided in Table 4. The study employs simple statistical

4. Trends of Migration in India

In this section the trends of migration in India is reported from 1981 to the latest census data 2001. From the Table 1, it is observed that according to the Census data, the

migration rate for all segments peaked in 1981 to 30.3 per cent, which declined in 1991 to 27 per cent, and increased to 30.1 per cent in 2001. Between 1981 and 1991, the total number of migrants grew by only 12 per cent, but between 1991 and 2001, the migrant stock increased by 37 per cent.

Table 2 shows the different categories of migration streams, the proportion that migrated from the same district or from other districts, within same state or from

other states based on both NSS 55th and NSS 64th round survey for all-India. The survey results of NSS 64th round show that at the all-India level, the rural to-rural migration stream was dominated by intra-district migration (72 per cent) and nearly 96 per cent in the rural-to-rural migration was through intra-State migration. For other categories of migration streams too, the share of intra-State migrants was dominant though lower compared to rural-to-rural migration stream: 75 per cent for rural-

Table 1. Number of migrants and migration rate, 1981 to 2001

Census Year	Place of Resident	Number of Migrants			Migration Rate		
		Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
1981	Total	201607061	59235306	142371755	30.3	17.2	44.3
	Rural	143583222	31354273	112228949	28.3	12.1	45.3
	Urban	58023839	27881033	30142806	36.8	33.2	40.8
1991	Total	225887846	61134303	164753543	27.0	14.1	40.9
	Rural	159190095	31196064	127994031	25.6	9.8	42.5
	Urban	66697751	29938239	36759512	31.0	26.3	36.2
2001	Total	309385525	90677712	218707813	30.1	17.0	44.1
	Rural	207773661	42528896	165244765	28.0	11.1	45.8
	Urban	101611864	48148816	53463048	35.5	32.0	39.4

Source: Various Reports of Census of India, NSSO

Table 2. Distribution (per 1000) of internal migrants by last usual place of residence for each component of rural-urban migration streams during 1999-00 and 2007-08

Migration Stream	Last usual place of residence			
	Within State		Between States	All States
	Same District	Different District		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
55th round (1999-2000)				
rural-to-rural	753	201	46	1000
	[75]	[21]	[46]	[100]
rural-to-urban	438	365	196	1000
	[44]	[37]	[20]	[100]
urban-to-rural	465	335	200	1000
	[47]	[34]	[20]	[100]
urban-to-urban	366	435	199	1000
	[37]	[44]	[20]	[100]
64th round (2007-2008)				
rural-to-rural	724	232	44	1000
	[72]	[23]	[4]	[100]
rural-to-urban	412	336	252	1000
	[41]	[34]	[25]	[100]
urban-to-rural	488	338	175	1000
	[49]	[34]	[18]	[100]
urban-to-urban	279	492	229	1000
	[28]	[49]	[23]	[100]

Source: Census of India, NSSO, Various reports [the data pertains to all India level]

to-urban, 83 per cent for urban-to-rural and 77 per cent for urban-to-urban migration streams. The pattern of migration observed through different streams in NSS 55th round is also broadly similar to that observed in NSS 64th round with some minor increase in rural-to-urban and urban to urban migration through inter-State migration in 2007- 08. The increase was 5 percentage points for rural-to-urban migration stream and 3 percentage points

for urban-to-urban migration stream in NSS 64th round from the corresponding shares observed in 55th round.

Table 3 compares the stated reasons for migration for 1993, 1999–2000 and 2007–2008. It explains the reason for migration based on different survey rounds of NSSO (49th, 55th and 64th rounds). The reasons for migration for males and females showed distinct pattern. The reason for migration for the male migrant was dominated by

Table 3. Distribution (per 1000) of migrants by reason for migration during 1993, 1999-2000 and 2007-2008

Reasons for migration	Migrated in			
	Rural areas		Urban Areas	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5
	49th round (1993)			
Employment related reason	477	83	415	49
	[47.7]	[8.3]	[41.5]	[4.9]
Studies	41	11	180	70
	[4.1]	[1.1]	[18]	[7]
Marriage	23	616	9	317
	[2.3]	[61.6]	[0.9]	[31.7]
Movement of parents/earning member	208	237	283	495
	[20.8]	[23.7]	[28.3]	[49.5]
Other reasons	251	53	113	69
	[25.1]	[5.3]	[11.3]	[6.9]
All	1000	1000	1000	1000
	[100]	[100]	[100]	[100]
	55th round (1999–2000)			
Employment related reason	303	10	519	30
	[30.3]	[1]	[51.9]	[3]
Studies	53	4	62	13
	[5.3]	[0.4]	[6.2]	[1.3]
Marriage	94	888	16	585
	[9.4]	[88.8]	[1.6]	[58.5]
Movement of parents/earning member	260	63	270	310
	[26]	[6.3]	[27]	[31]
Other reasons	290	35	133	62
	[29]	[3.5]	[13]	[6.2]
All	1000	1000	1000	1000
	[100]	[100]	[100]	[100]
	64th round (2007–2008)			
Employment related reason	286	7	557	27
	[28.6]	[0.7]	[55.7]	[2.7]
Studies	107	5	68	22
	[10.7]	[0.5]	[6.8]	[2.2]
Marriage	94	912	14	608
	[9.4]	[91.2]	[1.4]	[60.8]
Movement of parents/earning member	221	44	252	294
	[22.1]	[4.4]	[25.2]	[29.4]
Other reasons	292	32	109	49
	[29.2]	[3.2]	[10.9]	[4.9]
All	1000	1000	1000	1000
	[100]			

Source: NSSO Reports, different rounds

employment related reasons, in both the rural and urban areas. Nearly 29 per cent of rural male migrants and 56 per cent of urban male migrants had migrated due to employment related reasons. However, for females in both rural and urban areas, the mandatory reason for the migration was influenced by marriage reasons: for 91 per cent of rural female migrants and 61 per cent of the urban female migrated due to the marriage. Study as a reason for migration also accounted for nearly 11 per cent of rural male migrants and 7 per cent of urban male migrants. The percentage of female migration due to studies is relatively lower than male counterpart. The migration of parent/earning member of the family also significantly induced male migration in both the rural and urban areas: for, nearly 22 per cent. For urban females, migration of parent/earning member of the family, is the another important reason for migration after marriage, accounting for nearly 29 per cent of total urban female migrants. Therefore, it is observed that among the different reasons for migration, migration due to employment related reasons is the prime factor for male in both the rural and urban areas. However, regarding the female, marriage related reason predominates in both rural and urban migrants. The rest of the factors for migration depend on the nature and behaviour of the migrants depending on the socio-economic backgrounds.

One of the major reasons for inter-state migration or intra-state migration is because of urbanization. Census 2011 results 2011 show that the urban population in India has touched 377 million or 31.16 per cent of the total population as shown in Table 4. The decennial growth rate of population during 2001–2011 is more or less the same as the preceding decade. Both the role of migration in the increasing urban population and the future prospects of urbanization are subjects of great importance. In the earlier section of literature it is explained by different surveys that urbanization is one of the reasons behind migration. It has shown that the overall migration rate in urban areas has increased (including mobility of urban residents), reflecting greater overall mobility. The most significant study was the one conducted by [2, 7] as cited in the review in previous section. As in the period 2001–2011, the urban population has increased from 286 million to 377 million, (the highest ever since independence) so as the number of new towns has increased significantly in this period – by 2,744 towns. This shows the number of migration has increased in the last decades from rural to urban. This can also be explained better by the migration

rates in urban areas in India as shown in Table 5 below, for both the male and female population.

Table 4. Trends of urbanization in India (1901 – 2011)

Census Year	Urban Population (In Millions)	Per cent Urban	Decennial Growth Rate (%)	Annual Exponential Growth Rate (%)
1901	25.85	10.84	-	-
1911	25.94	10.29	0.35	0.03
1921	28.07	11.17	8.2	0.79
1931	33.46	11.99	19.2	1.76
1941	44.15	13.86	31.97	2.77
1951	62.44	17.29	41.42	3.47
1961	78.94	17.97	26.41	2.34
1971	109.11	19.91	38.23	3.24
1981	159.46	23.34	46.14	3.79
1991	217.18	25.72	36.19	3.09
2001	286.12	27.86	31.74	2.75
2011	377.11	31.16	31.80	2.76

Source: Bhagat and Mohanty [2]; Bhagat (2011).

Note: Estimations/Interpolations have been made for populations for whom census operations could not be conducted in 1981, 1991 and 2001. Census 2011 figures are provisional.

Table 5. Migration rates in urban areas in India, 1983 to 2007-08 (in %)

Years	Male	Female	Total
1983-84	27	36.6	31.6
1987-88	26.8	39.6	32.9
1993-94	23.9	38.2	30.7
1999-00	25.7	41.8	33.4
2007-08	25.9	45.6	35.4

Source: NSSO - 2010 a.

It is observed from the Table 5 that the increase in the migration rate to urban areas has primarily occurred owing to increase in the migration rate for females. Although females migrate owing to marriage, many of them take up work sooner or later, joining the pool of migrant workers in urban areas. On the other hand, the male migration rate in urban areas has remained constant (between 26 and 27 per cent), but employment-related reasons of migration for males increased from 42 per cent in 1993 to 52 per cent in 1999–2000 to 56 per cent in 2007–2008 as given by the (NSSO 2010a report) [9]. This shows the increasing importance of employment related migration to urban areas. When the reasons of migration by various streams of migration is analyzed,

Table 6. Migrant and non-migrant workers by type of employment (% of all workers), 2007- 2008

Employment Status	Male				Female			
	Migrants		Non-Migrant		Migrants		Non-Migrant	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Self-employed	40.2	30.6	54.3	46.2	59.5	43.7	51.7	37.6
Regular jobs	26.7	57.6	8.8	36.7	3.7	36.6	6.1	43.4
Casual workers	33.1	11.8	36.9	17.1	36.8	19.7	42.2	19.1

Source: Report on NSS 64th Round (Migration in India)

such as rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to rural and urban to urban, the employment-related reasons go as high per cent in rural to urban migration (as explained in the previous Table 2). Further, within the rural to urban migration stream, there is an increasing importance of inter-state rural to urban migration for employment-related reasons².

As the current paper attempts to estimate the trends of migration of labours in India, it is meaningful to analyze the data on migrants and non-migrants by source of employment status. Since the latest data on Census 2011 is not available as per migration data, here NSS report of 64th round data on migration is taken for the analysis. Table 4 shows the profile of migrants and non-migrants by employment status both in rural and urban areas for male and female. The purpose of this table is to clarify the source of migration for what purpose – may be due to self-employed or regular or casual. It shows the migration of workers by employment status. From the table itself it is observed that there are marked differences in the type of employment between male migrants and non-migrants in both rural and urban areas. Male migrants are much better represented in regular wage/salaried jobs and a lower percentage of them work as self-employed or as casual wage workers, both in rural and urban areas. However, on the other hand, female migrants are less well represented in regular jobs and are more likely to be self-employed than non-migrant women.

5. Impact of Migration

Migration has diverse impacts on growth and development of a country in terms of social, political and economic perspectives. For a developing economy, the economy needs to take off from traditional economy to modern economy to grow and develop. In a developing nation like India, the rural-urban migration is a primary source of growth and accumulation in the economy and in the

destination regions. This is also supported by the data of urbanization and consequent migration to urban areas as explained in the previous Table 4 and 5.

For the rapid growth of industrialization and modernization, the combination of skilled and unskilled labours to meet the supply of workers is necessary from different parts/regions of the country. When there is heavy concentration of industries, may be manufacturing or service sector, there is a greater demand for migrant workers. A significant population of workers are pulled in the Surat city of Gujarat for Diamond industry. Breman³ has argued that the continued existence of a large mass of unorganized workers belies expectations that workers would eventually shift from the traditional to the modern sector. And it is observed that the major informal sector industries show a steady replacement of local workers by migrant workers. He also finds that rural-urban migration shares a number of features in common with rural-to-rural migration. Another impact of migration is due to out-migration on source areas. Out-migration contributes to the income of migrant workers and, depending upon the condition of the migrants and the nature of migration, could also contribute to savings and accumulation. For example, labour out-migration may also speed up qualitative changes in extant labour relationships in rural areas, and thereby affect the pace of change. Further, migration has a differential impact on individual household members and intra-household relations. To say, migration has diverse impacts in terms of intra-household, on women, children, elderly parents, and gender relations and these remain behind an important area of study.

6. Conclusion

The present study is an analysis of the overall scenario of migration in India with particular focus on the migration of workers. The study reported number of migrants during

1981 to 2001, as data is constraint due to not availability of census 2011 report on migration. It is observed that according to the Census data, the migration rate for all segments peaked in 1981 to 30.3 per cent, which declined in 1991 to 27 per cent, and increased to 30.1 per cent in 2001. Between 1981 and 1991, the total number of migrants grew by only 12 per cent, but between 1991 and 2001, the migrant stock increased by 37 per cent. The study also shows the different categories of migration according to different streams based on various NSSO reports of various rounds. The survey results of NSS 64th round show that at the all-India level, the rural to- rural migration stream was dominated by intra-district migration (72 per cent) and nearly 96 per cent in the rural-to-rural migration was through intra-State migration. For other categories of migration streams too, the share of intra-State migrants was dominant though lower compared to rural-to-rural migration stream. The reason for migration for the male migrant was dominated by employment related reasons, in both the rural and urban areas. Whereas for the females, the main reason is due to marriage in both rural and urban areas. To say, the major reasons for inter-state migration or intra-state migration are because of urbanization. Urbanization process in India is rapidly expanding and cities of Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata are all among the populous urban areas. Internal migration is driven mainly by employment and marriage factors. It is supported by the increasing importance of employment related migration to urban areas. A major reason of this growth of rural-to-urban migration is a number of people do not find sufficient economic opportunities in rural areas and therefore they are compelled to move to urban areas with wider scope for economic opportunities. Migration by employment status show that male migrants are much better represented in regular wage/salaried jobs and a lower percentage of them work as self-employed or as casual wage workers, both in rural and urban areas. The challenges face by the migrant labours is in terms of diversity of languages and cultures, with various documentations process required regarding housing, job security and other personal related works under a given social strata. There is an improvement in the literacy rates among the rural youths with various educational and employment programmes launched by the government, but still most of the rural areas is characterized by agrarian distress, a chronic lack of employment, and farmer suicides cases. In other words, the rural-urban divide

has been one of the primary reasons for labour mobility in Indian states. And most of the internal migrants are women due to marriage reasons, and the percentage is more for rural females. On the other hand, men migrate mostly for employment related reasons and most of the labour migrants are employed particularly in subsectors like construction sectors, textiles industry, agriculture, transportation, etc. For example, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the states that migrated to other states to look for better opportunities to states like Gujarat (particularly textiles industry), West Bengal, Haryana, New Delhi, and Maharashtra among the major states to absorb migrated workers. Further, migration has a differential impact on individual household members and intra-household relations. To say, migration has diverse impacts in terms of intra-household, on women, children, elderly parents, and gender relations and these remain behind an important area of study. The issues of inter-state migration indicate that redistribution of wealth, income and opportunities is required among the states so that there is equal distribution of opportunities to different strata of society.

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