

RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION IN INDIA: TYPES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract

Rural-urban migration is a way of life to many of the rural poor; it has rarely been studied at a macro level despite its high prevalence in India. Drawing from the recently available Indian National Sample Survey (2007-08, 64th Round), this paper aims to study this concern in terms of the factors influencing rural-urban migration, types, challenges and consequences of migration in India. Rural-urban migration plays a significant role in the present-day context. The current study examines the comparative status of migrants in urban India, and seasonal and long-term migration in different streams. It also ascertains how the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) can impact rural migration in rural India. The study is based on secondary data collected from various published sources and government records. This study can help in an understanding the present status of rural-urban migration in Indian society. The study can assist in the development of rural-urban migration at grass-root level.

Keywords: Migration, Rural-Urban, Social Security, Employment

Introduction

Human migration has become a key issue for developing and developed countries in recent years. People have always been moving from one place to another. In recent times, however, global changes have affected migration considerably, swelling the numbers of

migrants. Rapid urbanization and industrialization have generated additional employment opportunities. For many people, moving away from their hometowns or villages to urban habitats in search of satisfactory employment opportunities offers them a chance to better their lives. Migration can be highly effective in terms of securing improved socio-economic conditions, access to higher education, and giving the family and children a chance to better their future prospects. Landless poor from the poorest communities, the most backward castes, and those from economically backward regions constitute the majority of migrant labourers. Trends in migration are in constant and differ from state to state in India. Migration has become so rampant that its impact is felt in every aspect of life. It has become a way of life for hordes of semi-skilled and unskilled rural people who have difficulty finding a decent job in their hometowns. Large numbers of the poor migrate to towns and cities for daily, or contract wage employment, or self-employment.

In India, both early and recent studies have shown that there exists a connection between urbanisation and economic development (Bhagat, 2012). Urban areas comprise 1/3rd (31%) of India's total population (according to the 2011 Census), and contribute 65% of the GDP. India has about 8000 cities and towns. In all, 53 million live in cities and make up 43% of the urban Indian population, illustrating that a larger percentage of the population is concentrated in economic activity (Bhagat & Mohanty, 2009). Thus, the flow of migration links places that have traditionally been demarcated as rural or urban. In particular, India has experienced spurts in rapid urban population growth as a result. Various push-and-pull factors are the reason for rural to urban migration, arising from regional disparities among Indian states (Iyer, 2004). Major push factors for migration in villages are low daily wages, lack of job opportunities, water scarcity, family problems, and the migration of spouses. Pull factors in cities or urban areas are high wages, immense job opportunities, access to basic amenities, comfort, convenience, and a relatively better quality of life. There have been dominant flows of rural-urban migration since the colonial period, particularly among poor communities (Haan, 1999). Studies reveal that migration happened on account of debt, persistent poverty, and drought.

Migration is the process of leaving one's home to move to a new area or location in search of work, livelihood or a better quality of life, as a result of marriage, to escape persecution or because of displacement (UNESCO 2015). The new economics of labour migration theory says that individuals migrate to other localities with a specific intention of increasing their earnings in a fixed period of time before returning home. It must be noted that it is the migrant's family or household that reaps the benefits, rather than the migrant himself. Migration is an important component of urbanisation in the Indian continent, and according to the 2011 Census, about 1/3 of the population lives in urban areas. Nearly 31% of the urban population, comprising 377 million people, is spread across 800 cities and towns in India (Joaquin, 2004). Push-and-pull factors are key aspects of migration. Push factors stem from a lack of job opportunities that result in poor living conditions. Pull factors are employment opportunities that help migrants lead relatively decent lives (Bodvarsson, 2009). Pull factors influencing the migration of workers include higher wages for unskilled workers, increased opportunities for employment, and shortage of local workers. Further, the rapid growth of cities, coupled with a bustling economy, has contributed considerably to migration. The spurt in activity, particularly in the infrastructure and construction sectors, has played a part as well in shaping migration patterns (Haseena, 2015).

Circular migration or temporary migration rates are high in remote rural areas, especially among the chronically poor in India. Particularly high rates are found in drought-prone areas with low agro-ecological potential and poor access to credit. For example, it is estimated that 3,00,000 labourers migrate from the drought-prone district of Bolangir in Western Orissa every year (Deshingkar, 2003). In Andhra Pradesh, migration increased between 1980 and 2001, with people attracted by wages in cities (Deshingkar, 2008). Keshri & Bhagat (2013), in their article based on recent data from the Indian National Sample Survey (2007-08), discussed the status of temporary migration at a national level. The outcome found that the rate of temporary worker migration is seven times higher than that of permanent worker migration. A major finding of the study is that temporary migration is chiefly a rural phenomenon, dominated by rural to urban migration. Further, there are

socio-economic differentials between the two forms of worker mobility: migrants belonging to poor and disadvantaged caste groups with low educational accomplishments have a higher propensity to engage in temporary work. The study concluded that temporary migration is principally a survival strategy for workers, and is different from the phenomenon of permanent worker migration (Keshri & Bhagat, 2013).

Types of Migration

Migration can be classified, based on its direction and duration. Based on the direction, migration may be rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban, and urban to rural. Also, the movement of migrants may be restricted to inter-district, intra-district, inter-state or intra-state patterns. Migration cycles range from a few weeks to a few (4-6) months, and depending upon their distance, may occur once or several times during a year (Srivastava, 2011). Migration is usually categorized, depending upon the length of time. There is short-term and long-term migration, as well as temporary and permanent migration (Haan, 1999). On the basis of distance, it may be classified as short-distance and long-distance migration. The general interests of the family and the collective decision of its individual members may culminate in voluntary or forced migration. The movement of people may be dictated, perhaps, by personal interests as well. Involuntary migration is the movement of people from their place of origin to new areas because of war (armed conflict), environmental degradation or natural disasters (drought and famine), social organization (family, class and individual migration), causes (economic and non-economic), and aims (conservative and innovative) (Sinha, 1983). Depending upon the rural-urban nature of the area, migration becomes rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to rural and urban to urban (Sinha, 2005).

All types of people move from one geographical setting to the next, influenced by space, direction, wage, time, and stability. The types are explained below:

Inter-Continental Migration: Inter-continental migration is the movement of people from one continent to another. Such migration occurred between the 17th and 20th centuries. Initially, the exodus began from Europe, when people began moving out to other countries as part of a colonization drive.

International Migration: International migration happens when people across international borders. International migrants are further classified into three: legal immigrants, illegal immigrants, and refugees. People cross the border of one country and settle permanently in another to secure their lives and be entitled to a measure of personal safety.

Inter-State Migration: *Inter-State Migration:* Inter-state migration is the movement of people from one state or province to another. Such migration is common all over the world as no government approval is needed, and people are at liberty to move from one place to another.

Rural-Rural Migration: Rural-rural migration is the movement of individuals from one rural area to another. Such migration usually occurs in developing countries, since the majority of people living in rural areas experience an imbalanced distribution of resources, though agriculture is highly developed.

Rural-Urban Migration: Rural-urban migration involves a shift from a primarily agrarian economy to a non-agrarian one. Urban areas characteristically offer plenty of opportunities for jobs, in tandem with modern conveniences and a relatively luxurious lifestyle, driving the migrant move to urban habitats. Rural-urban migration is common in developing countries and presents challenges and opportunities in both sectors.

Urban-Urban Migration: Urban-urban migration is the movement of people from one urban area to another. People shift as a result of circumstances, such as a job transfer or a new job in a different location

Urban-Rural migration: The movement of people from urban to rural areas is urban-rural migration. Such migration happens people when get tired of their workplace, busy schedules, and the stress of urban living, and hope to get away from it all by resettling in a remote rural hamlet.

A Theoretical Baseline on Migration

The classical immigration theory states that every migrant relocates to where it is assumed that high wage rates and job security are offered, and the cost of transportation borne. The theory asserts that only when there are differentials in wage and employment conditions do people choose to migrate, the individual's aim being to maximize earnings. The

neoclassical theory of migration makes few assumptions. A major aspect of neoclassical theory is that it looks at a migrating person as a rational individual and somebody who is good at decision-making. Therefore, according to Harris and Todaro (1970), migration is voluntary and supported by rational individual decisions, taking into account the expected increment in wages and other employment opportunities (Harris, 1970). The return of migrants is considered an outcome of a failed migration. The criticism of the neoclassical theory of migration is that it failed to explain why only a few people prefer to migrate to other localities, given that relative poverty and backward socio-economic conditions exist everywhere (Joaquin, 2004). Also, this theory did not throw light on a major topic, like the plight of contract workers. The neoclassical theory also failed to address the question of why only a few countries have higher emigration rates compared to others. Marxist theories on migration try to explain how migration is exploitative in nature. These theories suggest that migrant exploitation is both direct and indirect; wages are much lower than the market rate; there is the extraction of overtime and child labour, and the terms of the contract resemble those in bonded labour relationships. In addition, intermediaries are found to use traditional caste-based and patriarchal modes of oppression to maintain exploitative labour relations (Olsen, 1996).

Data and Methods

The study focuses on four major dimensions: i) to ascertain the status of migrants in different age groups in urban India, ii) to comprehend the nature of short-term and long-term migration patterns in society, iii) to examine the distribution of migration in diverse streams in the present context, and iv) to study the factors influencing rural-urban migration, the different types of migration, and the social security measures in place to handle rural-urban migration in India. Further, it assesses whether the MGNREGA Act (2005) impacts rural-out-migration in rural India. The present study is based on secondary data collected from various published sources. This study helps in understanding the current status of rural-urban migration in society. The data used is drawn from the all-India National Sample Survey, 64th Round (2007-08).

Table1: The Distribution of Migrants in Urban India by AgeGroup, 1999-2000 and 2007-2008

Age Group	Male		Female		Total	
	1999-2000	2007-2008	1999-2000	2007-2008	1999-2000	2007-2008
0-14	13.5	12.9	6.9	6.3	9.5	8.7
15-24	18.5	18.6	15.6	14.2	16.7	15.8
25-34	19.7	20.8	25.9	24.2	23.5	23.0
35-44	19.5	17.8	22.1	20.8	21.1	19.7
45-59	19.9	19.8	18.7	22.9	19.2	21.8
Above 60	8.9	10.1	10.9	11.7	10.1	11.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Unit-level data of the National Sample Survey (1999-2000, 2007-08)

Table 1 shows the migrant population in urban India by age and sex. In most age groups, the population in terms of the percentage of migrants during 1999-2000 and again in 2007-2008 has shown a marginal dip. The gender-wise distribution result does not register a huge difference. However, in each age group, the percentage of male migrants has increased over the years, except in the age groups 0-14 and 45-59. Particularly among female migrants, there has been an overall decrease, except in the age group 45-59 and in those above 60. Socio-economic reasons and modernisation likely contribute to increased migration every year.

Table2: Seasonal Out-Migrants and Long-Term Out-Migrants: A Comparative Profile, 2007-2008 (in percent)

Social Group	Short-term migrants Rural	(Seasonal) Urban	out- Total	Long-term out-migrants		
				Rural	Urban	Total
ST	20.1	3.5	18.6	6.8	2.2	6.0
SC	23.7	17.5	23.1	19.2	11.8	17.9
OBC	39.5	43.6	39.9	44.5	37.9	43.3
Others	16.7	35.4	18.4	29.5	48.0	32.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Sample Survey, 64th Round (2007-08)

The Constitution of India (Article 19) guarantees all citizens the right to move freely all the way through the territory of India, and to settle and reside in any region in India. Presently, short-term or seasonal/circular migration, involving back-and-forth movement between a source and a destination, has shown a steep increase. It is estimated that short-term migration has risen from 15 million to nearly 100 million in 2001 (Deshingkar, 2003). Generally speaking, short-term migration is restricted to socio-economically deprived groups, such as the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. These groups characteristically have had a limited, basic education or restricted access to resources, owing to which they are readily inclined to migrate. Table 2 above clearly depicts that 18.6% of STs, 23.1% of SCs and 39.9% of OBCs engage in long-term migration in India. Likewise, 6.0 percent STs, 17.9% SCs and 43.3% OBCs have opted for long-term migration.

Table3: Distribution of Migrants in India by Streams of Migration, 1999-2000 and 2007-2008

Stream	Male		Female	
	1999-2000	2007-2008	1999-2000	2007-2008
Rural to Rural	32.3	27.1	70.3	70.0
Rural to Urban	34.3	39.0	14.4	14.8
Urban to Rural	10.7	8.9	5.2	4.9
Urban to Urban	22.6	24.8	10.1	10.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Unit-level data of the National Sample Survey (1999-2000, 2007-08)

Migration is currently a key issue, with people moving from one place to another for diverse reasons. Specifically, gender mobility in terms of different migration streams reflects the social and economic factors underlying the practice of migration. In the Indian context, migration is significantly dominated by a rural to urban shift, and is a major component of the urbanization process. The data in Table 3 above shows sex-wise migration in 1999-2000 and in 2007-2008. Rural to rural male migration has decreased from 32.3% in 1999-2000 to 27.1% in 2007-2008, while and rural to urban male migration has risen sharply

from 34.3% in 1999-2000 to 39.0% in 2007-2008. The fact that rural men have been moving to cities for jobs and better wages is a key component of increased rural-urban migration. Simultaneously, rural to urban female migration has shown a correspondingly slight increase. Socio-economic push-and-pull factors have drawn rural people to urban habitats.

Factors Influencing Rural-Urban Migration

Economic Factors: Economic factors are perhaps the most significant in voluntary migration, with the lure of better opportunities drawing labourers from place to place. Other factors that influence rural-urban migration are:

- a) *Wage and Income Differentials:* Wage and income difference is a major economic factor in rural-urban migration. Attractive high wages influence people to switch to the urban labour market. An ILO (International Labour Organization) study (ILO, 1966) shows high wage rate and income as the primary push-and-pull factor influencing rural to urban migration.
- b) *Differences in Employment Opportunities:* The expanding urban sector has created huge employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers. Rural workers shift to urban areas in the sure hope that they can expect to secure employment, where there is little scope for any in their own hometowns. In particular, the employment opportunity generated in the manufacturing sector is a significant factor affecting rural-urban migration.
- c) *Technological Advancement and Farm Mechanization:* Technological advancement and mechanization of agriculture are also decisive factors in rural to urban migration. The Green Revolution technology used in India ushered in intensive external inputs that required relatively more capital than labour. Penetration of capital-intensive methods of production into the agricultural sector, the substitution by factory-made tools and other articles for those produced by rural artisans, and the mechanization of certain processes reduce labour requirements in rural areas.

Demographic Factors: Differences in the rate of population increase in different areas of the country have been found to have resulted from internal migration. The fertility rate, which naturally affects the population, is generally higher in rural than urban areas. The lack of economic resources forces people from rural areas to move to cities. A major type of female migration in India happens largely as a result of marriage. It is a cornerstone of Hindu culture and tradition to take a bride from a region that is not the bridegroom's. After the marriage, the woman moves into the husband's home. According to the National Sample Survey, more than 46% of all female migration to urban areas is caused by marriage.

Social and Cultural Factors have influenced rural to urban migration in India. The traditional constraints of social organisation, exclusion from the community, or conflict within the family may be causes for migration in the present generation. Improved communication technology, facilities such as transport, television and cinema, modernisation, and an urban-oriented education increase the flow of migration. Values and attitudes also promote rural to urban migration. The primary social factors are given below:

a. *Family Structure:* Family size and composition affect rural to urban migration. The larger the size of the family, the greater the probability of migration. Males in a joint family migrate, leaving wives and children behind at home with others in the family to care for them. Whereas, in a nuclear family, such a support system is unavailable, and therefore the probability of migration is quite small. Extended families are better able to promote migration than nuclear families. The broad structure of such families allows and encourages the migration of its members as a means to create investment opportunities for the family.

MGNREGA and Rural-Urban Migration

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has played a strategic role in containing the out-migration of the unskilled, landless labour force in rural areas. MGNREGA does this by ensuring these people up to 100 days' employment with wages, and within the radius of their hometowns. Because MGNREGA is a guaranteed full

employment program with wages, it helps landless peasants during the lean season, and has had a positive impact on rural-urban migration. MNREGA has reduced the problem of excessive population pressure on Indian cities, as surplus rural labourers are being offered employment in their own villages. In certain rural areas in India, this program has been not implemented well and it has therefore failed to function properly. Consequently, people have been moving away elsewhere to secure better employment. In rural areas, particularly, movement is seasonal. If MGNREGA can be made to function properly throughout the year, rural workers have every chance of finding decent employment in their own hometowns, which will reduce the pace of rural-urban migration (Akthar & Azeez, 2012).

Social Security Measures for Migration in India

Social security measures instituted by the government protect migrant workers, and provide for their welfare through a series of labour laws. Considerable social and economic distresses caused by a stoppage or substantial reduction in earnings, resulting from sickness, injuries sustained at work, maternity, unemployment, old age and death; the provision of medical care, and subsidies for families with children (ILO, 1989). The International Labour Organisation has recommended labour laws for workers, as follows:

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979. The Act covers only interstate migrants recruited through middlemen or contractors, and is applicable where five or more workers are employed on any given day. All migrants are required to register where necessary, and all employers/contractors employing migrant labour are to pay equal wages to inter-state migrant workmen performing work of a similar nature as local labourers.

Minimum Wages Act of 1948. All workers are to be paid minimum wages, and in some cases, those who work from home as well, as per the schedule of the Act. The wage rate for all employees is fixed by the Central and State Governments. The minimum wage ranges from Rs.143 to Rs.1120 per day for work in the so-called central sphere. State governments have their own minimum wage schedules.

Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1952. This Act seeks to ensure the financial security of workers in an establishment by providing for a system of compulsory savings. The Act provides for the establishment of a contributory Provident Fund (PF) for workers. *The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970*, regulates the employment of contract labour in certain establishments. It provides for the abolition of certain kinds of circumstances involving workers. When work requiring contract labour is likely to continue for as long as prescribed, the contractor is required to provide and maintain restrooms, or make appropriate arrangements for the well-being of contract labourers.

Conclusion

Migration has been significantly changing the social and economic structure of rural communities. Livelihood activities of rural families are no longer restricted to farming and agriculture. The development of trade and industry, coupled with a rapid increase in awareness brought on by mass media, has culminated in people shifting from rural to urban areas.

The lack of employment opportunities in rural areas and enormous employment prospects, as well as infrastructure in urban areas, has spurred people to migrate to different areas.

In rural India, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been a significant factor in reducing the migration of labour through the provision of locally available work. However, despite some success, the programme did not do as well as expected. The fact that MGNREGA has had limited impact partially stems from its misconception of labour migration as poverty and merely a product of the push-and-pull economic factor. It assumes that farming is what 'the poor' really want, establishing poverty as chiefly a rural problem to be tackled by rural development. Labour mobility is not driven solely by economic considerations; there are two sets of reasons why people still prefer to migrate: social factors and evolving perceptions of modernity. The poor have aspirations that are not restricted to mere survival. The MGNREGA program has benefited

those who have little or no access to positive migration opportunities, especially the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, but is unlikely to succeed in curbing labour mobility significantly. It may be a good way, though, to curb distress migration.

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