

# Labour Migration in Karnataka-Some Issues and Challenges

<sup>1</sup>Dr. B. Jayarama Bhat & <sup>2</sup>Nagesha. B

<sup>1</sup>Professor, Dept. of PG Studies and Research in Economics, Kuvempu University, Shivamogga, Karnataka (India)

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Dept. of PG Studies and Research in Economics, Kuvempu University, Shivamogga, Karnataka (India)

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### Corresponding Author

Email: [bj\\_bhat1959@yahoo.co.in](mailto:bj_bhat1959@yahoo.co.in)

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## ABSTRACT

There are both economic and social imbalances among the states in India which lead to internal migration in general. Migration of labour is a major issue, particularly in developing economies. Achieving rapid economic development is a major objective of every country. Labourers migrate normally to rainfed regions in Karnataka to earn better livelihood. Labourers also migrate from rainfed areas of Malnad to the industrial areas in the state. The youth from the rural areas is migrating to the non-formal sector in the cities. This paper deals with the issues and challenges of labour migration in Karnataka. Secondary sources of information are depended on in the paper.

## 1. Introduction

The rural poor in India are found engaged in both agricultural and non-agricultural occupations. But rural employment has always been synonymous with occupation in agriculture and allied activities. There are mainly labour household, basically comprising of wage labourers as well as self-employed petty cultivators who are partially-peasants and partially-labourers. The term migration has been usually understood to cover all cases where the decision to migrate was taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of personal convenience and without intervention of an external compelling factor.

Migration, therefore, applies to persons, and family members, moving to another region to improve their material or social conditions and to improve the prospects for themselves or their family. The United Nations defines migrant, as "an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular. Under such a definition, those travelling for shorter periods as tourists and business persons would not be considered to be migrants. However, common usage includes certain kinds of shorter-term migrants, such as seasonal farmworkers who travel for short periods to work in planting or harvesting farm products". Migration refers to the movement of people from one geographical location to another, either on a temporary or permanent basis (Ekong 2003). It is a common observation all over the world that rural-urban migration is a dominant pattern of internal migration. Migration is a selective process affecting individuals or families with certain economic, social, educational and demographic characteristics. People migrate in response to prevailing conditions and the reasons for it differ from one individual to another, there are two main types of migration: first, internal migration, i.e. migration within one country, and secondly, international migration, which means the movement from one country to another. This movement has some time helped them to get the benefits of growth and development.

## 2. Review Literature

A very brief review of studies on the subject has been made here under;

In a research paper on "**Rural-Urban Migration and Surplus Labour**", Kul B. Bhatia (1979), found that flexible work-hours and surplus labour in agriculture are aggregate into the Harris-Todaro Model, migration equilibrium is characterized by equality of expected welfare rather than expected income into the dual sector. Increase in expected wage still causes out-migration from agriculture, but if the commodity price ratio is exogenous, out-migration occurs when minimum wage is raised even when expected urban wage is constant. Moreover Migration flows are larger than in a closed economy with fixed work-hours. Implications of these results for determining shadow wage rate of labour and designing economic policy are also discussed in the paper.

Deepak Nayyar (1985), in his research paper "**International Labour Migration from India: A Micro Economic Analysis**", found that the financial flows from international labour migration are much more important in the microeconomic context in relation to savings and investment in the economy. However, the study did not find any significant influence of inflow of remittances on domestic savings and investment. On the other hand, the study confirmed that remittances by migrants have improved the balance of payments position of the country. The study also found that migration has a positive impact on exports although its impact was found to be very small on imports.

In an article entitled "**Low Quality Migration in India: The Phenomena of Distressed Migration and Acute Urban Decay**", Shekhar Mukherji (2001), analysed that the big urban cities are developing very fast in India, unfortunately with slum increasing many times faster. Exploitation, pain, poverty, depression, insecurity, humiliation, and human unhappiness are also increasing in the recent years. These crucial problems will aggravate many times in the early part of the next century, particularly when by population explosion and increasing migration.

Naresh Kumar and A.S. Sidhu (2005), in their study **onPull and Push Factors in Labour Migration: A Study in Punjab**, identified the push and pull factors which impact labourer's inter-state migration on the basis of attitude of workers. They took 200 sample workers drawn from 25 brick kilns placed in 3 districts of Punjab state. This study found that better job opportunities, industrial development, and absolutely higher wages in Punjab were the most important pull factors which influence labour to migrate. But inadequate agricultural land, underdevelopment, and poor economic conditions of family forced labourers to migrate out of their villages. Further, the study also found that economic factors have developed more significant as compared to non-economic factors in the process of migration. The study recommends that in view of the slow concentration rate in the urban industrial sector, the labour migration should be regulated. Finally the study suggested that existing plans and their effective implementation are needed in order to reach the people.

A study of S. K. Shashi Kumar and Z.ZakirHussian (2008) entitled **“Managing International Labour Migration from India: Policies and Perspectives**, reveals about the labour migration flows from India since 1990. The paper not only addresses issues related to international labour migration from India, but also deals with safety polices of migrant workers. This paper properly makes an effort to do a detailed evaluation of Emigration Act 1983. It also explains as how the IT enabled industry in India has been expanding during the previous decades. Finally, the study makes a strong note on the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation to transform migration to efficient process.

L.Naik Sri Limbya andM. G. Huddar and K.C.Tarachand (2009), in a study of **190LambaniThandas of HoovinahadagaliTaluk in Karnataka**,evaluated the socio-economic status of migrated Lambanis. The study found that better work opportunities and high wages in neighbouring places like Chikkamaglore, Mangalore, Hassan, Coorgepromoted migration. The socio economic status of the migrants were analysed and the study found that many respondents had small land holdings which did not provide employment in all the seasons of the year. The migrants had the highest rate of illiteracy and the lowest standard of education,who migrated along with their children because of which their children lost the opportunity of getting education. A highest number of child labour, child trafficking and sale of kids were found common in the study area.

An article of L.Shylaja(2010), entitled **“Socio-Economic and Demographic Impact of Labour Emigration in Kerala”**, analysed the influence of labour migration on the socio-economic and demographic features of the people in Kerala. Particularly, the study is based on primary data gathered from

both the rural and urban areas of Malappuram, Pathanamthittaand Thiruvananthapuram. The author found that emigration has played a significant role in changing of large families into small ones. Moreover, the study also found that emigrant families have maintained higher standard of living, healthy conditions and also earned more assets on account of the inflow of remittances. Finally the study also found that the added ratio of empowerment of women in the emigrant families is 2 to 4 times higher than that of non-emigrants. The educational goals for their children in emigrant households increase with the increase in the period of stay abroad and the study found a slight gender preference usual among the women members in the emigrant households.

K. C.Zachariah and S.IrudayaRajan(2010),in their study on **Migration Monitoring Study, 2008 - Emigration and Remittances in the Context of Surge in Oil Prices**,found that the effects of recession resulted on loss of jobs abroad and on return of migrants to Kerala. According to the study, there were 1.73 lakh returnee emigrants of which 63000 of them were direct victims of recession and about 28000 could not find a job on return. The recession had stopped the remittances of 90000 households in Kerala whereas the remittances of about 4.31 lakh households have gone down. The study also found changes in the occupation of emigrants as a result of recession and this could be one of the reasons for the low rate of unemployment among emigrants. Though there was an increase in remittances during the recession period, many sub-groups showed very significant decreases in the remittances.

**3. Paper Scheme**

The present paper is an analysis oflabour migration in Karnataka in general focusing on the issues and challenges of migration in Karnataka. The paper isdescriptive and analytical in nature; based on secondary sources of information gathered from different published sources.

✓ **Migration- The Reasons**

Here, using secondary data, published by the Census of India in the year 2011, some issues of migration particularly of the reasons and tenure of migration are briefly discussed. Table 01 below gives data on specific reasons for migration.

There are many reasons for migration. Data related with these are provided in Table01.

**Table-01 Reasons for Migration**

Reasons For Migration						
	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
	Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Others	Total
Rural	4,685,704	10,283,325	1,658,738	1,347,636	526,329	18,501,732

	(25.32)	(55.58)	(08.98)	(07.28)	(02.84)	(100.00)
Urban	3,464,243 (32.99)	4,047,626 (38.55)	1,370,010 (13.05)	1,129,371 (10.75)	486,911 (04.67)	10,498,161 (100.00)
Total	9,134,767 (28.50)	15,943,566 (49.80)	3,230,348 (10.08)	2,630,383 (08.20)	1,104,178 (03.42)	32,043,242 (100.00)

Note: Figures in brackets show percentage to total, horizontal.

Source: Registrar General of India, Census 2011, Data on Migration, Karnataka State

Data presented in Table- 01 describe the reasons for migration. It is found that of the total migrants, as per the 2011 Census, a remarkable proportion (49.80 percent) of the migrants migrate for the purpose of the business. About 28.50 per cent migrated for employment, 10.08 per cent for education, 08.20 per cent migrated due to marriage, and 03.42 per cent assigned other reasons for migration.

#### ✓ Migration-The Tenure Issue

Further, it would also be appropriate here to give data related to tenure of migration. Table 02 gives data as related to migration took place for a period up to ten years.

**Table-02 Period of Migration (up to 10 years Tenure)**

Migration (up to 10 years tenure)						
	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
	Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	others	Total
Rural	5,738,013 (44.26)	2,113,394 (16.30)	3,624,619 (27.97)	829,735 (06.40)	657,566 (05.07)	12,963,327 (100.00)
Urban	3,640,460 (42.44)	1,718,804 (20.01)	1,921,660 (22.36)	722,121 (08.41)	582,805 (06.78)	8,585,854 (100.00)
Total	9,378,477 (43.52)	3,832,198 (17.78)	5,546,279 (25.73)	1,551,856 (07.22)	1,240,371 (05.75)	21,549,181 (100.00)

Note: Figures in brackets show percentage to total, horizontal.

Source: Registrar General of India, Census 2011, Data on Migration, Karnataka State

Data presented in Table-02 show the figures related to migration in Karnataka for a tenure of ten years. Of the total migrants, as per the 2011 Census, 43.52 per cent migrate for employment, 17.78 per cent for business, 25.73 per cent for education, 07.22 per cent due to marriage, and 05.75 per cent due to the other reasons for a tenure of ten years. It can be inferred from the data that a remarkable proportion of (43.52

percent) the migrants migrate for the purpose of the employment from the rural areas who have migrated up to a tenure of ten years.

The question of migration for a period above ten years would also be pertinent here. The data related to which are presented in Table 03.

**Table-03 Migration (over 10 years Tenure)**

Migration (over 10 years Tenure)						
	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
	Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	others	Total
Rural	9,228,136 (46.19)	2,571,109 (12.87)	6,657,027 (33.32)	828,748 (04.14)	689,897 (03.48)	19,974,917 (100.00)
Urban	3,868,825 (43.34)	1,744,065 (19.52)	2,124,760 (23.78)	647,660 (07.25)	546,414 (06.11)	8,931,724 (100.00)
Total	14,560,074 (45.47)	4,841,288 (15.10)	9,718,786 (30.33)	1,595,595 (04.97)	1,236,311 (04.13)	32,042,212 (100.00)

Note: Figures in bracket show percentage to total, horizontal.

Source: Registrar General of India, Census 2011, Data on Migration, Karnataka State

Data presented in Table- 03 describe the issue of migration over 10 year's tenure. Of the total migrants, as per the 2011 Census, a remarkable proportion (45.47 percent) migrate for the purpose of employment, 15.10 per cent for business, 30.33 per cent for education, 04.97 per cent due to marriage, and 04.13 per cent migrated for other purposes than the above for a period above ten years in Karnataka.

#### 4. Discussion

It is necessary here, to know about the forces behind migration. Below a few such forces, found, are briefly analysed.

#### 4.1 Forces behind Migration

The forces responsible migration can be listed as follows:

1. Poverty and Lack of Job Opportunities in Rural Areas
2. Housing Problems
3. Migration hoping Better Standard of Living
4. Unemployment
5. Urban Biased Policies

##### 4.1.1 Poverty and Lack of Job Opportunities in Rural Areas: Poverty is still one of the most serious problems in

the world. Many existing development policies take poverty alleviation into consideration, which has led to much economic advancement. Many jobs available in rural areas are agricultural based, the introduction of labour savings devices and unfavourable weather conditions has decreased the demand for labour in the agricultural sector. Decline in the traditional form of employment in rural areas forces many young people to leave the area in search of work in the urban centres of their state.

**4.1.2 Housing Problems:** Certain persons moved from metropolitan cities or large towns to nearby smaller towns or other areas due to the problems of getting suitable accommodation, poor amenities, or high rent etc. Such persons were classified under this reason.

**4.1.3 Migration Hoping Better Standard of Living:** Workers also migrate from rural areas to urban areas hoping for better standard of living. They may leave their current jobs in the hope of finding higher payments (earnings) as there are many more opportunities for better employment to choose from in the cities.

**4.1.4 Unemployment:** Labour migration and the resulting unemployment have been one of the major issues in the traditional as well as contemporary global economic scenario. Economists have developed different models to explain the incidence of labour migration in the context of a dual economy. All these models based on the assumption that there are two sectors that comprise a developing economy namely the primary sector which is a characterized by surplus workforce, whereas the Secondary sector acts as the engine of growth for the economy.

**4.1.5 Urban Biased Policies:** This is another force behind labour migration. The government policies supporting disproportionate increase in wage rates and employment opportunities in the urban areas contribute to imbalance in the rural-urban areas in a wider scale causing accentuated migration.

## 4.2 Challenges

Of course, problems related to migration are challenging, some of the challenges identified are given below.

1. Rapid Growth in Population
2. Lack of Skilled Human Resource
3. Inadequate Resource Allocation
4. Challenges of High Labour Migration Cost

**4.2.1 Rapid Growth in Population:** If labour migration takes place too fast or unexpectedly, the planning necessary to accommodate growth will not be in place. Rapid growth of population leads to issues such as overcrowding increased traffic and pressure on resources such as schools and medical centres and the like.

**4.2.2 Lack of Skilled Human Resource:** Illiterate and unskilled workers are commonly found. They fail to get jobs in urban areas who also can't afford housing in cities and thus live in slums and suffer from unemployment and make a living in the informal sector, causing a real challenge in the existing system.

**4.2.3 Inadequate Resource Allocation:** Rural areas also confront the problem of inadequate resource allocation; it causes poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and finally lack of growth. It is one of the major causes for labour migration as argued by Gunnar Myrdal in his Migration Theory. According to him migration causes backward and forward effects in the economy.

**4.2.4 Challenges of High Labour Migration Cost:** The high labour migration cost is the result of several causes continuing in Karnataka of origin and destinations. The travelling cost of labour migration is too high and they are travelling from rural areas to urban area, and there is no good road connectivity as well, provision of which is also highly challenging in capital shortage economies.

## 5. Suggestions

Based on the above the following suggestions may be made here:

- Better infrastructure for migrants is needed in the destinations, for example better transport for movement to centres and service provisions such as access to health and others.
- Agricultural and Rural development should be given a high priority in the government policies and programmes aimed at combating labour migration.
- A major policy focus has to be on a more vigorous pro-poor development strategy in the backward areas. This should address the needs of these regions, and simultaneously improve the access of the poor to land, financial resources and governance institutions.
- Ensure basic entitlements to migrants and their families, a focused approach is required to ensure that the basic entitlements of the poor to food, elementary education, basic health are fulfilled, as also their entitlement to other government programmes and subsidies.
- Improvement in the economic, social and political environment in favour of mitigating labour migration.
- An improved information base, orientation and skills are also important requirement in the case of labour migration. Labour markets of the major labour importing states need to be closely monitored.

## 6. Conclusion

It may be said that labour migration in Karnataka is mostly influenced by social structures and pattern of development. The development policies by all the governments since

independence have accelerated the process of migration. Both the issues and challenges of labour migration have extensive and in fact overwhelming economic importance/ impact. Therefore, the need of the hour is to take all out steps to mitigate the problem of increasing migration, particularly the rural-urban migration, mainly by provision of adequate

opportunities of all kinds at the place of origin so that those who intend to migrate decide to stay back at the place of origin and change their mind not to migrate. PURA may be seriously thought of effectively for proper implementation in the Indian setup.

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