

Study of Various Dimensions of Human Migration in India: A Sociological Perspective

Dr.Utpal K. Patel

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology at Sarasvati College of Arts, Viravada, Gujarat, India

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 10 December 2018

Keywords

Migration, Social Structure, Ethnic Conflict, Social Migration, Economic Migration.

ABSTRACT

Migration has been viewed so much as part of the economic process that it is hardly acknowledged that it shapes social structure, culture and history. On the other hand, the economic reasons of migration based on economic theories pervade migration studies compared to its roots in social theories. Consequently, non-economic reasons for migration are generally overlooked in the role of migration and migration studies. More recently, non-economic reasons such as marriage, education, removal of violence and conflict in search of security and security are important reasons for migration. Political prosecution and forced migration are part of the non-economic factors that turn many people into refugees and internally displaced people. This migration covers a multitude of areas that could be kept under the control of a non-economic migration zone. This paper focuses on the diverse social perspective of migration, further it talks about how the social structure in India leads to and conflicts also.

1. Introduction

Prior to the colonial era, the reasons for migration were primarily religious and trade purposes (McNeill, 1984). Movement also played an important role for the military movement. People traveled with cows looking for pastures. Nomadic migration was an important feature outside the Ganges Valley, even for short distances. This practice is still found in parts of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh in central India and is one of the earliest forms of circulation in the history of human migration. (Hutton, 1986) When the British came to India, the old feud order had collapsed. The collapse of the mogul's empire has caused political turmoil and turmoil in many parts of India. But still, India in the 18th century was wonderful. British ester in the face of machined garments produced at the Lancashire and Munch factories, although not only the manufacturing industry, but also great agricultural nations, and Indian hand woven machines were supplying the Asian and European markets, Indian textiles (both silk and cotton) and related industries (carding, dyeing, printing) could not survive, and as a result, India experienced a hollowing out of industry, many craftsmen and their dependents I moved to the countryside. Thus, India during the second half of the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century experienced urban to rural migration unlike many European countries that migrated rural to urban during the same time. As a result, cities and towns declined and weakened. and people became more dependent on agriculture (Nehru, 1965). Economic hardship and economic unrest were other important reasons for emigration in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In any event, there are indications that mobility from the countryside to the town is limited by the implementation of guild or guild-like restrictions on employment in urban crafts. Further, the structure of production and consumption patterns that led urban output was a major impediment to the growth of rural-urban migration due to the limited access. For unskilled and casual laborers (Commander, 1989). In this, migration has been a historical process that shapes social structure of caste and class, patriarchy and

family relations. Migration also plays a very important role in today's regionalism in India calling on the feelings of 'sons of the soil'. The impact of migration on people's social and political life is huge, but these have little place in the research and discourse on migration, as economic aspects of migration and its impact on the labor market dominate the current literature on migrate. On the other hand, this paper presents the relationship between migration and India's social structure and also highlights the migration policy issues.

2. Migration and Social Structure

Kingsley Davis (1951) in his groundbreaking work on India argued that Indians are less mobile. This conclusion was based on inter-provincial/state migration which was 3.6 percent in 1931 in India compared with 23 percent in the United States in 1940. David attributed this fact to the prevalence of the caste system, families collectively, traditional values, linguistic and cultural diversity, lack of education and dominance of agriculture and semi-feudal land relations in India. In any event, the fact that Indian migration remains a largely 'in-state' phenomenon remains. According to the 2001 Census - the most recent migration data from the 2011 Census has not yet been published - shows that interstate migration is only about 4 percent (41 million). of India's population compared to 26 percent of the state's immigration (268 million) (Bhagat, 2010). Therefore, considering the total mobility including within and between state migrations, Indian mobility poptimizationis close to 30 percent - slightly higher than Davis believed. It is also alarming to see that the 30 percent internal mobile population has remained remarkably stable over recent decades and is also consistent with NSS data.

India's social organization is known for the institution of caste- a hierarchical arrangement of social groups where status is determined by birth. Each social group also lived in a spatially demarcated area also identified with the level of purity and pollution. The lowest rung of the caste hierarchy are the *Shudras* (also known as untouchables now called as scheduled castes) always occupied the outskirts of villages as

they were considered to be polluted. In fact, historically they have been the agrarian working class in the villages who tilled the land which they did not own. The traditional system of procuring agricultural labour tied to land and land owners similar to the system of serf in Europe was very much prevalent in India. This system of caste relations which was both social and spatial was known as *Jajmani System* (patron-client relationship) which kept the agrarian labouring classes immobile. On the other hand the privilege of mobility was confined to the *Brahmins* (priestly castes) and *Vaishyas* (trading castes) principally who moved to provide priestly services and the trade of goods respectively. The traditional *Jajmani system* has been giving way as urbanization unfolded the opportunity of salaried jobs and wage labour in cities and towns (Dube 1990). Dr B. R. Ambedkar was highly critical of the village system of economic and social relations which kept *Dalits* under subjugation and bondage for centuries.

He declared, "I hold that these village republics have been the ruination of India...What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism? (Moon 994:62). Urbanization provided an immense scope for the scheduled castes people to migrate into the cities and free themselves from the yoke of caste system. While Dr B.R Ambedkar believed in the emancipatory role of migration to cities for the dalits, Kashiram felt that dalits whether migrated from villages or not, caste always remained with them (Narayan 2014). However, Joseph (2007) argues that city offers a space for the development of separate identity and also a space of liberation compared to the constricting village system. Although dalits generally live in slums in urban areas, it is still different from villages as urban way of life based on secondary relations and heterogeneity offers avenues of freedom and mobility.

It would be interesting to know how propensity to migrate varies by social groups. Broadly two types of migration could be identified namely permanent and semi permanent which is identified based on change of usual place of residence. This category is also generally considered as typical migration in migration studies. There is another type of migration which is of seasonal and temporary nature and the migrant is not expected to change the usual place of residence. NSSO (2010) defines a seasonal or temporary migrant as "a household member who has stayed away from the village/town for a period of one month or more but less than six months during the last 365 days for employment or in search of employment. This is also called short term migration- a dominant form of migration from rural areas.

Table 1

Migration Rates by Types of Migration and Social Groups in India (per 100 population)

| Social Group | Permanent/Semi-permanent (Based on change of residence) | | Seasonal and Temporary (No change of residence) | |
|-----------------------|---|-------|---|-------|
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| Scheduled Tribes | 23.8 | 36.5 | 49.0 | 6.5 |
| Scheduled Caste | 26.0 | 33.7 | 29.9 | 7.6 |
| Other Backward Castes | 25.5 | 33.1 | 23.9 | 6.5 |

| | | | | |
|--------|------|------|------|-----|
| Others | 28.1 | 37.9 | 18.0 | 3.4 |
| Total | 26.1 | 35.4 | 26.4 | 5.5 |

Source: 75th Round of National Sample Survey 2017-18, unit level data.

Table 1 shows that permanent and semi-permanent migration does not vary much across social groups but seasonal and temporary migration is higher among the Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes- the socially disadvantaged groups. Seasonal and temporary migration largely occurs in the rural to urban migration stream. Further, studies show that the annual rate of seasonal and temporary migration is seven times higher than permanent and semi-permanent migration (Keshri and Bhagat, 2013). Studies also point out that that seasonal and temporary migration is a livelihood strategy among rural households (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009; de Haan, 2011; Keshri and Bhagat, 2012). The largest proportion (about 36%) of seasonal and temporary migrants is employed in the construction industry followed by agriculture (20%) and manufacturing (about 16%). There is a dearth of data on the actual magnitude of seasonal and temporary migration and estimates vary from about 13 million, based on the NSSO, to 100 million evaluated by individual researchers (Keshri and Bhagat, 2013; Deshingkar and Akter, 2009). The Planning Commission suggested that there is a need to undertake state-centric surveys to capture the flow and pattern of migration to the various sectors, particularly the construction sector (Planning Commission 2013: 363). Srivastava (2012) opines that seasonal and temporary migration has been increasing in recent times. Recently there has been an effort to provide livelihood security to the rural population through the launch of a massive rural employment programme under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005. Rural workers are provided by the Central Government with 100 days of employment on demand at the real wage rate of 100 rupees per day. According to the Economic Survey 2011-12, 'the MGNREGA has successfully raised the bargaining power of agricultural labour, resulting in higher agricultural wages, improved economic outcomes, and reduction in distress migration' (Ministry of Finance 2012). However, while the differential in rural and urban wages has narrowed down, the share of rural to urban migration has risen (Hnatkovska and Lahiri, 2013). It is possible that MGNREGA may have had some impact on reducing rural to rural male migration which has fallen more substantially than the rural to urban migration.

3. Patriarchy, Gender and Migration

Migration has been an age and sex selective process as men is believed to be the breadwinners across many societies. On the other hand, the institution of patriarchy determined women's migration resulting due to marriage and the movement of family. But in the recent times there have been many social and economic changes such as globalization, changes in the structure of labourforce and rising education leading to the growing share of women among both international and internal migrants. However, in India, gender relations are shaped by the institutions of family and marriage deeply embedded within the institution of caste. Mobility of women was controlled and carefully planned within this system

either through the normative structure such as patrilocal residence or in the name of safety and security of women. In more patriarchal society of north and north-west India, village exogamy is practiced combined with the practice of child and early marriages which subjected them to sub-ordination and exploitation. *Purdah* (veil) system was practiced in this part of the country which perpetuated their dependency and curtailed their freedom (Dyson and Moore 1983). Women were not allowed to move without a male escort, and also their movement is contingent upon the permission of the male members- be it father/father-in-law or husband. As a result, women's migration is dependent upon the movement of husbands or other family members. Also, marriage emerges as a predominant reason of migration. Table 2 shows that employment appeared as the main reason for males to migrate, whereas marriage is the main driver of female migration in urban India. It shows that women's agency as measured through independent movement on account of employment is seriously limited in Indian situation. Table 2 also shows less than 3 per cent women migrants reported employment as a reason of migration. It seems that women's agency play little role in the process of migration. This might reinforce patriarchy if males have greater access to job market in the urban areas compared to females. Further, women migrants are generally employed as domestic servants as well as construction workers. Women migrants are also found working as sales workers, beauticians, hair dressers, call centre workers etc. However, the paid domestic work was the most gender distinctive feature of urban wards labour migration by women (Mazumdar, Neetha and Agnihotri and 2013). Studies also show that illiterate women have higher propensity to migrate than illiterate men (Singh, Keshri and Bhagat 2016). Thus the emerging labour market seems to be segmented with women migrants relegated to low skilled, less paid and less secure jobs of informal nature. This shows that the cities have become exclusionary whereas the patriarchal pressure to migrate continues resulting into the increased confinement of migrant women to the sphere of home. This has resulted into increased disempowerment and vulnerability of women migrants who need protection and safeguards.

Table 2

Percentage Distribution of Permanent/Semi-permanent Migrants by Reasons for Migration, Urban, India

| Reasons | Male | Female | Total |
|-------------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Employment ¹ | 55.9 | 2.6 | 22.9 |
| Marriage | 1.4 | 61.2 | 38.4 |
| Studies | 6.8 | 2.2 | 4.0 |
| Others | 35.9 | 33.9 | 34.7 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Source: 75th National Sample Survey 2017-18, unit level data.
 Note: ¹Employment related reasons: In search of employment, in search of better employment, business, to take up employment/better employment, transfer of service/contract, proximity of work.

4. Migration and Ethnic Conflict

Although migration in general and rural to urban migration in particular is conducive for economic and urban transition, there are many challenges confronting migrants in urban areas. A negative attitude towards migration persists as well as

a strong hostility towards migrants in spite of the fact that the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to move as a fundamental right under Article 19. The conflict between natives and migrants has been a core issue since the 1970s. In one of his early writings, Myron Weiner (1978) surveyed the nature of migration and the emergence of the ideology of the *sons of soil* leading to ethnic conflict in different parts India. He presented three types of conflict in three distinct regions, namely Assam, Chotanagpur and Hyderabad. In Assam, the reason for conflict was the success of migrants while the natives failed; in Chotanagpur, the cause was unique where tribal members encountered migrants which led to their subjugation and displacement; and in Hyderabad, the basis of conflict was the effort to protect the middle-class *mulki* (natives) from the competing migrants. In all three cases, Weiner (1978) argued that the sons of the soil meet the challenge of outsiders by advancing themselves into elitist positions in an effort to oust their non-indigenous competitors. This process has been accelerated rather than diminished by economic development and modernization. In the 1980s and later, the ideology of nativism further bolstered and spread to others areas, such as Mumbai, Goa and Meghalaya, inciting conflict and violence against migrants (Rajan, Korra and Chyrmang, 2011). The hatred against migrants in the case of Mumbai is more organized and intense as some political parties based on the sons of the soil ideology articulated strongly and voiced threats to the migrants (Hansen, 2001). Discrimination against migrants and their exclusion in India is more subtle and indirect compared to that in China where migration to cities is controlled through the institution of *hukou* (household registration). Persons with rural *hukou* may enter a city but are excluded from regular urban welfare benefits and social services, such as access to local schools, urban pension plans, public housing and other rights, that are available to people with urban *hukou*. Rural *hukou* labour now inundates almost all low-end factory jobs and services that have turned China into a world factory. This segment of migrants provides cheap labour to the cities and is easily exploited. They are not only vulnerable but also excluded from welfare services, urban citizenship and entitlements (Chan, 2012).

5. Conclusion

In India, all migrants are not equally vulnerable. Permanent and semi-permanent migrants with higher education and skills can withstand the challenges and succeed in becoming members of the urban citizenship. On the other hand, migrants belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with low education and skills, together with the seasonal and temporary nature of their employment, are more vulnerable and subject to various kinds of exclusions in urban areas. These categories of migrants are excluded from social security programmes such as public distribution of food, access to education and health care and, most importantly, entitlement to housing at the place of destination owing to the absence of identity and residential proofs. Social security programmes are place-bound and the implementation of the programmes fall under the purview of the state governments. The inter-state migrants incur more hardships as the portability of social security programmes is not possible on the one hand, while they face hostility from native residents instilled with the ideology of the *sons of the soil* on the other.

References

1. Bhagat, R. B.(2010)"Internal migration in India: Are the underprivileged migrating more"? *Asia Pacific Population Journal*, 25 (1), pp. 31–49.
2. Commander, S.(1989) The mechanics of demographic and economic growth in Uttar Pradesh, 1800–1900 In: *India's Historical Demography: Studies in Famine, Disease and Society* (Tim Dyson, ed.). Curzon Press, London, pp. 49–72.
3. Chan, K.W.(2012) "Migration and development in China: trends, geography and current issues"
4. *Migration and Development*, 1 (2): 187–205.
5. Davis, K.(1951) *The Population of India and Pakistan*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
6. Deshingkar, P. and J. Farrington(2009) "A framework of understanding circular migration" in P. Deshingkar and J. Farrington (eds)*Circular Migration and Multilocational Livelihood Strategies in Rural India*,Oxford University Press, New York.
7. Deshingkar, P. and S. Akter(2009) *Migration and Human Development in India*, *Human Development*, UNDP Human Development Research Paper, 2009/13; Available from:http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2009/papers/HDRP_2009_13.pdf .
8. De Haan, A.(2011) *Inclusive growth?Labour Migration and Poverty in India*.ISS Working Paper No. 513, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.
9. Dube, S.C. (1990) *Indian Society*, National Book Trust, New Delhi.
10. Dyson, T. and Moore, M. (1983) "Kinship structure, female autonomy, and demographic behaviour in India", *Population and Development Review*, 9 (1): 34-60.
11. Foresight (2011) *Migration and Global Environmental Change: Future Challenges and Opportunities, Final Project Report*, Government Office for Science, London.
12. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287717/11-1116-migration-and-global-environmental-change.pdf.
13. Hansen, T. B. (2001) *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
14. Hutton, J.H. (1986) *Census of India 1931: With Complete Survey of Tribal Life and Systems*, Vol. 1, Gian Publishing House, Delhi.
15. Hnatkovska, V. and A. Lahiri(2013) Structural transformation and the rural-urban divide, Department of Economics, University of British Columbia. http://faculty.arts.ubc.ca/alahiri/Rural_v32.pdf (accessed on 18th October, 2014).
16. Joseph, M.T. (2007) "Migration and identity formation: a case study of Dalits assertion in Aurangabad", in L. Stanislaus and J. Joseph (eds) *Migration and Mission in India*, Ishvani Kendra/ISPCK, Pune.
17. Keshri, K. and R.B. Bhagat,(2012) "Temporary and seasonal migration: regional patterns, characteristics and associated factors",*Economic and Political Weekly*, 47 (4): 81–88.
18. Keshri, K. and R.B. Bhagat (2013) "Socio-economic determinants of temporary labour migration in India",*Asian Population Studies*, 9 (2): 175–195.
19. Mazumdar, Indrani, N. Neetha and Indu Agnihotri (2013) "Migration and gender in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 48 (10): 54-64.
20. McNeill, W.(1984) "Human migration in historical perspective,"*Population and Development Review*, 10 (1): 1–18.
21. Ministry of Finance, Government of India(2012) *Economic Survey, 2011–12*, Government of India, New Delhi, p.314.
22. Moon, V. (1994)'Draft Constitution – Discussion' in *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*, Volume 13, Government of Maharashtra, Bombay.
23. Narayan, Badri (2014) *Kashiram: Leader of the Dalits*, Penguin.
24. Nehru, J.(1965) *Glimpses of World History*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay (reprinted in 1965 with 50 maps by J.F. Horrabin).
25. NSSO(2010) *Migration in India 2007–08*, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi.
26. Planning Commission, Government of India (2013) *Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–2017)*, Vol II: *Economic Sectors*, Sage Publication India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi.
27. Rajan, S. I, V. Korra and R. Chyrmang(2011) "Politics of conflict and migration",inS. Irudaya Rajan (ed.)*Migration, Identity and Politics*, Routledge, London, pp. 95–107.
28. Singh, Nishikant, Kunal Keshri and R.B.Bhagat (2016) "Gender dimensions of migration in urban India" in S. Irudaya Rajan (ed.) *India Migration Report 2015: Gender and Migration*, Routledge, New Delhi, pp. 176-190.
29. Srivastava, R. (2012) "Internal Migration in India: An overview of its features, trends and policy challenges", in *National Workshop on Internal Migration and Human Development: Workshop Compendium, Vol. 2, Workshop Papers*, UNESCO and UNICEF, New Delhi, pp. 1–47.
30. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2013) *Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India*, UNESCO, New Delhi.<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002237/223702e.pdf>.
31. Weiner, M.(1978) *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
32. World Bank (2009) *World Development Report: Reshaping Economic Geography*, The World Bank, Washington, DC.