

Trends and Patterns of Outmigration from Bihar


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After Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, Bihar is the third most populous state in India with 104.1 million people (Census of India 2011). Men have been leaving Bihar for a long time. Bihar's economy is sometimes called a remittance economy due to the high rate of outmigration from the state in search of employment. Migration streams and patterns have changed within the past several decades. Migration destinations have mostly changed from rural to urban locations throughout time. Agricultural labor gave way to non-agricultural jobs, including rickshaw pulling, building and construction labor, carpentry, masonry, and part-time employment in the unorganised sector. This research paper attempts to determine the current trends and patterns of outmigration from Bihar using census data from 2001 and 2011, as well as PLFS data from 2020–2021.

Keywords: outmigration, migration and development, trends and patterns of migration

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1. Introduction

The movement of people is considered as an in-built feature of development and the pace of migration is accelerated with the process of development. Within an economy understanding migration is complex as the forces driving migration are guided by combinations of economic, socio-cultural, political and historical factors and the consequences of such migration are specific. The various push and pull factors in the due course of development lead to the movement of rural people from low-productivity to high-productivity urban centres for employment. A person will often migrate for employment reasons, that is, from the place where the likelihood of obtaining a job is lower to a region where job finding is easier, largely as a result of the level of development gap between the economies and also between the regions.

Broadly, there are two types of migration: emigration (from one nation to another) and internal migration (from one region to another within the same country). Internal migration appears to be more significant than outward migration in the global context. Internal migration is recognised as an important mechanism through which the spatial distribution of people changes over time. Internal migration through the socioeconomic development of the country contributes to poverty reduction, bringing social change and is an important factor in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the census of India, a person would be classified as a migrant by the place of last residence if they had previously lived somewhere other than where they were counted. There were 450 million migrants in India as per the 2011 Census.

The volume of labor migration has an impact on a region's rate of growth as well. The traditional theories of economic growth have demonstrated that an economy may employ migrants as a resource for its development goals. According to the Lewis model of development (1954), excess labor moving from the subsistence sector to urban manufacturing produces a surplus in that sector. Through reinvestment, this surplus may be put to use for capital creation and economic expansion. Although this conclusion has theoretical ramifications, it causes a significant issue when surplus labor is found in the subsistence sector.

According to the Harris-Todaro model of development (1970), moving workers from rural to urban areas can lead to economic growth. According to their approach, migration is only permitted if the predicted wages in the urban sector are at least as high as the earnings in the rural sector. These theoretical findings have the intriguing consequence that labour migration might successfully be utilised for the region's development.

2. Migration and Development

Understanding the real pattern of outmigration and its significance for the general development of the specific region is crucial. Individuals move in response to greater possibilities that may arise from mobility. Well-planned rural-to-urban migration has been identified by development economists like Lewis (1954) and Fei and Ranis (1964) as a significant phenomenon that can support national economic development. The Harris-Todaro model predicted that because migrants expected jobs and a good standard of living in cities, urbanisation would become a stable and 'mainstreamed' element of social life. Migration is an essential component in the development process. It shows how the areas of origin and destination are linked dynamically. Migration is frequently explained as the result of an imbalance in development between the area of origin and the place of destination. The concentration of resources from the peripheral (an undeveloped area) to the centre (an area that is growing) further accentuates the underdevelopment of the periphery (Hagen-Zanker 2008). However, the link between the core and peripheral overall development pace is not excluded by the most current research on out-migration, which instead emphasises the crucial role of remittance in the process of growth at the periphery (McDowell and de Haan 1997). Circular migration is characterised in the literature on livelihoods as a rural household strategy in which some members leave the village in search of employment while others remain (World Bank 2007; Ellis 1998). To optimise income and diversify risks, this results in multi-sited families, whose members are dispersed between source and destination regions (Stark and Lucas 1988).

More recently, migration was acknowledged as an important aspect of the dynamics of the world's population and a catalyst for inclusive social and economic development in United Nations System

Task Team report on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda (United Nations, 2012). IOM and UN DESA (2012) list some of the significant ways that migration may affect development. UN DESA (2012), which observes that migration plays a significant part in the conventional development agenda, further emphasises the importance of migration for development by stating that it is a crucial cross-cutting problem that may serve as a facilitator of development. The accomplishment of various SDGs, including those relating to poverty reduction, health, education, and the environment, can be impacted by migration. Migration of laborers can be a significant strategy in the fight against poverty (Clemens and Pritchett, 2008; Galbraith, 1979). According to a recent analysis of empirical estimates, the free movement of people across borders can contribute between 50 per cent to 150 per cent of global GDP to total economic growth (Clemens, 2011). Furthermore, research examining how these benefits are distributed indicates that they may have a significant influence on reducing poverty by raising migrant workers' labour incomes and by changing the way that remittances are received by their home countries (Fernández-Huertas and Rapoport, 2011).

According to research by Caldwell (1968), migration is strongly associated with places that are economically developed. However, several research (Greenwood, 1971; Mukherjee, 1979; Jha, 1997) have found that migration is higher from economically underdeveloped countries than from advanced ones. According to Yadava (1998), the rate of out-migration would increase the larger the share of households with poor socioeconomic levels. People were driven to migrate for a variety of reasons, from a perceived lack of decent jobs to the potential for wealth growth in destination locations.

3. Labor Migration in India: An Overview

Migration from one place to another in quest of better economic opportunities is a fundamental aspect of human nature. People migrate to access these new possibilities while certain locations and industries lag in terms of their ability to support populations. There are various causes for the geographic difference. They come in both natural and man-made forms. It makes perfect sense that only established regions would attract investment.

There is a wealth of knowledge available on migratory trends throughout the British period. One effect of the end of slavery and the need for labour replacement was the exodus of Indians overseas. This was accomplished through the use of pacts, a type of contract labor in which a worker agrees to serve for a predetermined amount of time—typically four to seven years—in exchange for payment for their passage. They departed for Southeast Asian tea and rubber plantations after working on sugar plantations in British, Dutch, and French territories (Tinker, 1974). Similar labour demands increased domestically as tea, coffee, rubber plantations, coal mines, and subsequently modern industry expanded. But as they became more established, it served as a launching pad for further immigrants, whose numbers increased to meet colonial demand. Rural labour was mostly drawn to urban regions like Kolkata and Mumbai from labour catchment areas in the east, such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa, and the south, which included Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and portions of Kerala and Karnataka (NCRL, 1991; Joshi and Joshi, 1976; Dasgupta, 1987).

Given the vastness of India, it is likely that regional discrepancies would continue to exist. The size and expansion of these differences, however, raises questions. The rural underclass has steadily gathered in eastern India and in areas of central and western India that get rain. These areas experience low agricultural output. The bulk of the short-term out-migrants came from rural regions, and the majority of them were men. According to the trend research, a large percentage of men travel from rural to urban areas over considerable distances. Females, on the other hand, tend to travel locally and from one rural area to another. Marriage has been the cause of such nearby migration.

Poor households actively participate in migration, according to earlier research (Connell et al. 1976). More recent research (PRAXIS, 2002; Mosse et al. 2002; Hirway, 2001; Habersfeld et al. 1999; Rogaly et al. 2001; Srivastava, 1998) have indicated that migration is an important livelihood option for impoverished households in numerous parts of India. The social structure (Mosse et al. 2002) and the pattern of development (NCRL, 1991) both have an impact on migration. Focusing on seasonal migration, the National Commission on Rural Labour came to the conclusion that unequal development was the primary driver of seasonal movement.

Additionally, the lack of non-farm employment and low agricultural output have led to an increase in seasonal migration (Rogaly et al. 2001). Age, education, money, land ownership, productivity, and employment possibilities all affect how many people and households migrate (Haberfeld et al. 1999; Rogaly et al. 2001; Mosse et al. 2002), but so do social attitudes and enabling social networks.

The majority of the time, our knowledge of India's migration trends and patterns is based on census data, which has limitations in terms of accurately tracking transient, seasonal, and cyclical movement. According to census statistics, interstate migration has increased and has become increasingly feminised, largely as a result of marriage migration. According to the National Sample Survey, temporary and seasonal migration is seven times more common than permanent and semi-permanent migration. In contrast to permanent and semi-permanent migrants, temporary and seasonal migration is a technique for reducing poverty that is mostly adopted by the poor and lower socioeconomic groups of the Indian people.

According to the Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) (2020-21), the migration rate in India is currently at 28.9% which comprises 26.5% in rural areas and 34.9% in urban areas. The female migration rate in both rural and urban areas is around 48% while in the case of male migration, it is 5.9% in rural areas and 22.5% in urban areas. According to the censuses taken from 1991, 2001 and 2011, an estimated 20.4 million, 29.9 million, and 41.4 million people respectively migrated for a job or other employment-related reasons. According to PLFS (2020-21), employment is still a major factor in male migration but the percentage of such male migrants is reduced to 22.8%. Hence, a falling trend is being observed in the percentage of male migrants who migrate for employment. Better job availability in their home city/town/village might be one of the reasons. In the case of females, around 86.5% of them migrate due to their marriage and this percentage is over the past two decades.

In this article, the trend and pattern of outmigration from Bihar is discussed in detail. The objective of this study is to determine how outmigration from Bihar has evolved, which are the major destinations of outmigration, what are the major causes of outmigration, and how the outmigration varies across genders.

The study is primarily in the form of a literature review where facts, figures, and relevant information are gathered from different sources such as journals, magazines, reports, websites, and blogs. The findings are presented through tables and graphs followed by a brief discussion.

4. Migration in Bihar: Trends and Patterns

Bihar, one of the backward states of India is characterized by low economic development, high population pressure, and low social and human development. More than 40% of people live below the poverty line in Bihar and it is much higher than the national average. According to NSS, more than 70% of people in rural Bihar depend on agriculture as their main livelihood. Labor migration is very much prevalent in Bihar either as distress or voluntary. Bihar has the second-highest rate of out-of-state migration after Uttar Pradesh. Labor out-migration from Bihar is significantly high which is attributed to poverty, inequality and high dependency on agriculture. The prime factor for labor migration is due to the backwardness of Bihar's economy. Agriculture has sluggish growth and a diminishing percentage of income and employment in the state (Nadkarni 2018). Young people do not wish to work in agriculture, and farming is becoming less and less thought of as an economically feasible profession (Vijayabaskar et al. 2018). Away from the dominance of higher castes, lower caste workers likewise favor working outside of the hamlet (Roy, 2014; Sharma, 2005). Additionally, insufficient employment in the non-farm sector and the failure of public works initiatives like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to create jobs have fueled an increase in rural residents leaving their homes in search of employment (Sahu 2017; Datta 2016). The major destination of migration earlier used to be the high-productivity agricultural areas (green revolution areas) of Punjab, Haryana and most neighboring states such as West Bengal and Assam. However, in recent years migrants have moved to major towns and cities all over India to work in non-farming occupations such as rickshaw pullers and for manual work in the informal sector.

The majority of the people of Bihar, one of the poorest states in India (51.91%, according to the NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index, MPI 2021),

work as agricultural labor. According to several studies, residents of the State's rural labor go to the rural parts of Punjab and Haryana, two rich States. The usual "rural-rural" trend of migration from the State calls into question the notion that India would inevitably "urbanise." Accordingly, the Harris-Todaro model anticipated that urbanisation would become a constant and 'mainstreamed' aspect of social life due to migrants' expectations of work and a high standard of living in the cities. (Chatterjee, 2008; Government of India, 2009; Gupta, 2005).

Scholars have long been interested in the significant out-migration from Bihar because it became a metaphor for out-migration caused by underdevelopment and poverty. Understanding the true pattern of outmigration and its significance for the community of origin is crucial. The imbalanced distribution of land with a small number of rich landowners and the lack of appropriate industrialization that might provide a significant number of employment are the main causes of Bihar's underdevelopment. Bihar is mostly an agriculturally oriented state, but as time has gone on, agricultural output has decreased, pushing people to look for various non-farm activities to engage in. This is especially true in rural regions where people are actively engaged in agriculture and are looking for work during the slow season. In destination these migrants face challenges like low wage, lack of money and access to benefits of government programmes. Despite these, outmigration of labor from the state is continuous. This suggests, migration is not a choice but rather the sole means of surviving challenging circumstances in the state. According to Deshingkar et al. (2006), migration is considered a life cycle strategy in which male family members are often sent away when they reach a particular age and then send money home to assist their families.

In the colonial era, worker migrated from Bihar particularly from the western section of Bihar to Bengal and Assam became well-established in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Davis, 1951). The majority of this movement was seasonal, and better connectivity via railroads made it feasible for people to relocate easily and return to their original location for agricultural and other activities (Yang, 1979). For their little living, Bihar's marginal farmers and agricultural labourers relied heavily on the cyclical movement.

This migration played a significant complementary function in meeting the minimal requirements of the peasants and labourers when they were unable to obtain enough from agriculture (de Haan, 2002).

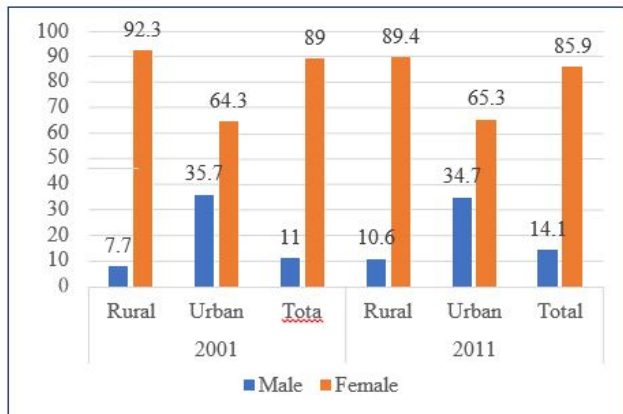
When the green revolution began in the north-western region of India in the 1960s, there was an extraordinary need for labourers in the agricultural sector, which sparked a wave of labour migration from Bihar to the west. Because of the changes in cropping patterns and the mechanisation of agriculture in green revolution areas, worker demand peaked after the 1980s. According to certain assessments, the volume of migration has also significantly grown since then.

Beginning from every region of the state, caste and class distinctions were not observed in the out-migration. Large cities like Delhi, Bombay, Surat, Kolkata, and Hyderabad are among the latest destinations of Bihar's workforce migrants (Karan, 2003). The new urban-ward shift is more permanent in character than the seasonal migration of people who used to relocate to rural areas in order to work in agriculture (Karan 2003; Singh et al. 2005). Workers engage in a wide range of professions, including security guards, rickshaw pullers, colliers, etc. (Sharma, 2005). According to Dishingkar et al. (2006), remittances are essential to the state's ability to maintain its way of life.

1. Trends of Migration in Bihar

Graph 1, shows the extent of outmigrants from the state using 2001 and 2011 census data. The figure shows people are highly migratory in this state with 5.26 million in 2001 to 7.45 million in the year 2011. The figure highlighted the point that the share of the female population in total migrants of Bihar is more than male with the female share of 89% and male 11% of total migrants in 2001 while the number of female migrants declined over the decade, in 2011 census 85% female and 14% male were migrating.

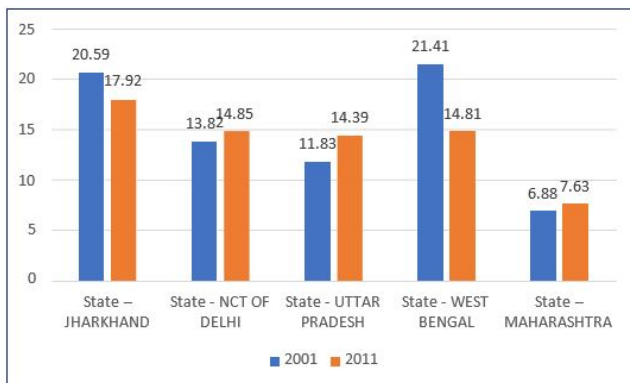
Total migrants of Bihar in rural and urban areas; 2001 and 2011



Source: Census 2001 & 2011

2. Major Destinations of Migration

Graph 2, shows the place of destination of out-migrants. The major destinations of out-migrants are Jharkhand (17.5%), West-Bengal (14.5%), Delhi (14.5%), Uttar Pradesh (14.1%), Maharashtra (7.5%), Punjab (4.5%), Haryana (5%), Gujarat (5%) and Punjab (4.2%). Jharkhand have replaced West Bengal as a top destination. Delhi is becoming more attractive to migrants. The direction of the move has shifted from Punjab, West Bengal to Jharkhand and New Delhi.

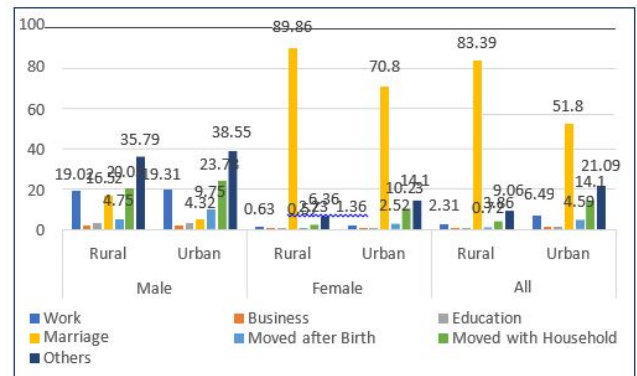


Source: Census 2011 & 2001, D- series

3. Reasons for Migration

According to the census 2011, there are six reasons for migration among these, migration for work/employment is on the top for males. Females mostly migrate for marriage purposes and also move with the household. Other factors for migration are business, education, moving after birth, moving with household, etc. Graph 3, shows some of the major reasons for migration for rural and urban migrants within males and females.

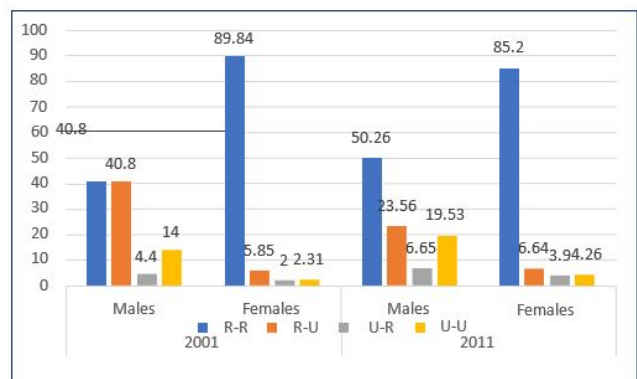
Graph: Major reasons for migration



Source: Census 2011

4. Streamwise Migration

There are four streams of migration. These are Rural to Rural (RR), Rural to Urban (RU), Urban to Rural (UR) and Urban to Urban (UU). Graph shows the streamwise distribution of migration. Here, it is clear that rural-to-rural migration is more prominent than another three streams for both males and females.



Source: Census 2011 & 2001

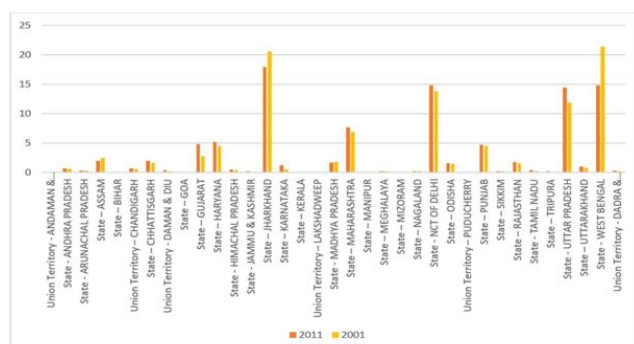
Graph 4, shows the movement of males in both rural-rural and rural-urban is higher in 2001 while in 2011, the rural-urban dominated the flow. Among males, 41% are migrating within rural-rural and it increased 50.26% in 2011. Around 41% moved from rural-urban in 2001 which is 23.5% in 2021. Likewise, female migration constitutes almost 90% in rural-rural followed by rural-urban.

5. Outmigration from Bihar

According to research on out-migration, most of India's developed regions use the workforce from less developed regions, with the majority going to Delhi and Punjab from Bihar. The most significant drivers of migration have emerged as underemployment and unemployment.

The majority of migrants have been identified as being from the underprivileged class, highlighting the economic fragility of this group of people as a motivation for exodus. Graph 5, shows the outmigration to different states from Bihar.

Graph: Outmigration from Bihar



Source: Census 2001 & 2011

Graph 5, reveals Out-migration from Bihar to Jharkhand is higher followed by Delhi, West Bengal. Between 2001-2011, there is an increase in out-migration to Jharkhand. It is empirically established that higher out-migration from Bihar is for employment reasons. While some experts claim that migrants endanger local employment and are drain on resources.

5. Conclusion

The perception that there has been little mobility in India has been reinforced by census data, which is primarily used to assess the migration trends and patterns in the country. The amount of temporary and seasonal migration for work purposes is seven times more than that of permanent and semi-permanent migration, according to studies based on alternative sources like the National Sample Survey. As a means of reducing poverty, the impoverished and lower socio-economic groups in India are the primary users of temporary and seasonal migration, whereas permanent and semi-permanent migrants are mostly attracted from the wealthier parts of the community.

Both the male and female migration rates decreased between 1971 and 1991. However, we see that this rate increased in the final decade of the 1990s. This tendency can be attributed to the informal sector's explosive growth and development, which has drawn many workers from rural regions. According to the trend research, a significant percentage of men relocate great distances and are mostly from rural to metropolitan areas.

In contrast, female migration often occurs over a short distance and is mostly rural to rural. Marriage has been the driving force behind this kind of short-distance migration.

Internal migration rises along with the nation's economy, causing drastic shifts in the nature and locations of economic and social activities, as well as in occupational patterns. In India, as well as Bihar, the majority of labour migrants from rural to urban areas are unskilled or semi-skilled. In 2011, there were approximately 22%, 10.0%, 4.7%, and 0.44% of the population who were intra-district, inter-district, inter-state, and international migrants. The year 2011 saw an increase in intra-district and inter-district migration when compared to the censuses of 2001 and 1991. International and interstate migrants, on the other hand, mostly stayed at the same level. The rural-to-rural migration stream, which accounted for 53.8% of all migrants in 2011, included 63.3% of female migrants and 31.3% of male migrants. This trend was also noted in the 2001 census. According to the 2011 Census, marriage for women (66.7%) and employment/work connected to males (24%) were the primary causes of migration.

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