



## INTER-STATE MIGRATION AND SECURITY ISSUE AMIDST EPIDEMIC IN INDIA

Dr. Indira Garnaik

### Abstract

Since decades migration, environmental situation, and security factor are interrelated to one another and these factors push or pull people to migrate throughout the world. In the current scenario when COVID-19 is declared as epidemic in India, mass exodus at inter-state level is reached at its peak, reason behind it is to secure themselves from disease and hunger due to shut down of the entire economic and industrial activities in the country. In course of inter-state migration specifically during epidemic, their security and life are full of ambiguity and uncertainty. Security issue of migrants is nothing new, but massive inter-state migration has arisen as a vital issue in new form recently after the sudden lockdown of the country. Their security is looked from the perspective of economic, food, political, physical, psychological, and health matters. Now, the question is whether the planners, scholars and policy makers are concerning this issue with gravity or overlooking this great bulk of the amorphous informal workforce. Actions taken by the states is undermining or protecting the safety and security of these people in terms of socio-political inclusion. The present study attempts to relate migration with the security issue and how and in what extent their human security is endangered when startling epidemic COVID-19 is shattered out in the country. Assessment of security effect of migrants in the present scenario in terms of laws, policies, procedures, health and economy of the country and finding out certain measures to sort-out the issue are the key purposes of this paper.

### Keywords:

Migrants;  
Security issue;  
Health;  
Economy;  
Shut down;  
Policies;  
Epidemic.

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### I. INTRODUCTION:

Contemporary period is an age of migration that not only highlights the intensity of migration but also shows the impact of migration on the county's economy, employment and poverty ratio. In 2015, migrants constituted 3.3% of world population contributing 9.4% of global GDP, 580 billion dollar to global remittances and 65% of the world migrants live in developed countries.<sup>1</sup> As far as the migratory population and growth is concerned, India stands at the top of the origin country and US is at the top destination country.<sup>2</sup> Since decades migration, environmental situation, and security factor are interrelated to one another and these factors push or pull people to migrate throughout the world. In the current scenario when COVID-19 is declared as epidemic in India, mass exodus at inter-state level is reached at its peak, reason behind it is to secure themselves from disease and hunger due to shut down of the entire economic and industrial activities in the country. In course of inter-state migration specifically during epidemic, their human rights are in risk and their life is at present, full of insecurity and uncertainty. Security issue of migrants is nothing new, but massive inter-state migration has arisen as a vital issue recently after the sudden lockdown of the country. Their security is looked from the perspective of economic, food, political, physical, psychological, and health matters. This study makes an assessment of security effect of migrants in the present scenario in terms of laws, policies, procedures, health and economy of the country and finding out certain measures to sort-out the issue are the key purposes of this paper.

## II. STATUS OF INTER-STATE MIGRATION IN INDIA:

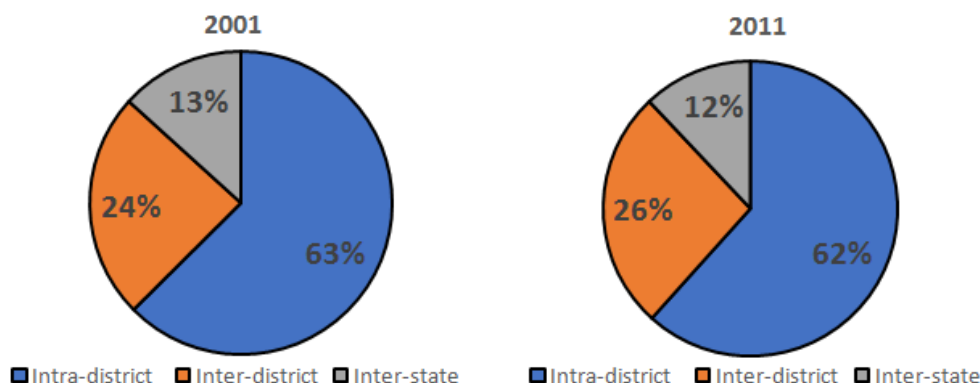
Article 19(1) of the Indian Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to move freely, reside and settle in any part of India. In past few years, India has been witnessing a large-scale migration, both inter-state, intra-state or within the states from rural to urban area due to globalisation and urbanisation. Census Report 2011 says internal migration in the country reaches at 450 million which is an increase of 45% over 309 million recorded in 2001.<sup>3</sup> Cities produce over 70% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the formal sector makes up about 65% of their workforce according to 2017-18 Periodic Labour Force Survey.<sup>4</sup> Mostly, migrants are moving from the original/parent states such as UP, Bihar, Odisha, Rajasthan, West Bengal to seven popular destination states scored on the IMPEX Scale such as Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Delhi, Maharashtra, Kerala and Punjab<sup>5</sup>. These migrant workers include skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Some of them are short-term/seasonal migrants, and are usually returning to their native place during festivals, sowing and harvesting period. Current research says, 'Average migration between neighbouring districts in the same state was at least 50% larger than that of neighbouring districts on different sides of a state border', said 2016 World Bank study<sup>6</sup>. The Economic Survey of India 2017 estimates that the magnitude of inter-state migration in India was close to 9 million annually between 2011 and 2016.<sup>7</sup>

▪ Rural to rural migration within the country	<b>53.3 million</b>
▪ Rural to urban migration	<b>20.5 million</b>
▪ Urban to rural migration	<b>6.2 million</b>
▪ Urban to urban migration	<b>14.3 million</b>

Note: Results from the 2011 Census are yet to be released providing data on this migration stream<sup>8</sup>  
About 30% of entire migration are observed as hardy workers or casual workers or daily wage workers working on daily basis getting 300-400 rupees per day, whose condition is very poor and vulnerable. Though they are part of mega and big cities yet, they are not included in the urban policy and programmes and no documentation about them is on record till now. They make India on move throughout its territory. Basic purposes behind moving from one place to another is to get some economic benefit either job opportunity, employment, financial benefit, business activities and survival of their family. They are politically excluded and dominated by others, sometimes psychologically and economically depressed. These migrants are not provided ration card, BPL and found politically excluded from vote bank politics, and slum dwellers. Sometimes, their human rights were violated and life was full of insecurity, uncertain, and risky.

Mostly, migrant workers are engaged in informal sectors working as street vendors, artisans, hawkers, small businessmen, domestic workers, wage workers and workers in informal firms or enterprises with sub-standard working conditions and salaries. Nearly 92% of the country's total workforce are at work in the informal sector, out of which inter-state migrants in India contributes 40% of work force possessing no privileges in social protection, economic security and incentive beneficiary. Though this sector offers very low wage and insecure earning, still people prefer to associate with it because they get wage on daily basis 'work and payment', however, it reduces substantial national poverty rate in India.

**Figure 2: Distribution of internal migrants by type of movement**



## III. INTER-STATE MIGRATION AND ITS POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES:

Inter-state migration in developing countries is a key income generating strategy for low-income households<sup>9</sup>. It is the main contributing factor for the developmental process of India and becomes the

dominant feature of labour work force. They are the real city/urban makers who produce, create, architect and fabricate the cities, towns, metropolis and megapolis. Massive exodus from one state to another, impact positively on state's economy in various ways such as, unemployment rate would be reduced in the original state because people are migrated to the destination states where they get greater job opportunity, it might lessen the rate of joblessness and poverty ratio of the concerned state and ultimately substantial national poverty rate. Secondly, improvement in the quality of life, manage to pay for better education of their children and better standard of living could be likely possible due to their greater earning in larger service opportunity. Thirdly, they direct money to their family for ailing old parents, better amenities, nutritional food, and higher education of their children, which would ultimately contribute greater remittance and supplement the economic growth of the country. Fourthly, population density of the original country is probably reduced owing to huge migration from existing states. Scarcity of food, basic amenities and increasing criminal activities committed by the idle, jobless persons are some of the related problems naturally, lowered down in the concerned state. Fifthly, population density is found to be evenly distributed in states throughout the country, and lastly, cheap human labour/ human resources could be properly utilised and better engaged in various industrial activities to increase productivity outside the states. Lastly, the migrants while returning to their parent states, they acquire skill, knowledge through exposure and interaction with the outside world.

#### **IV. INTER-STATE MIGRANTS AND SECURITY ISSUES:**

As far as the security is concerned, it broadly, implies the safety measures and actions taken carefully for one's protection and ensures him/her to be safe in physical, mental and monetary spheres. These measures are significant because these will lessen the chances of anxiety and worriedness of liabilities, insurance, compensation and other related damage issues of the migrants. Migration, environment, and security are correlated to one another since decades of time. Their security is looked from the perspective of economic, food, political, physical, psychological, and health matters and their safety from violent and non-violent threats. Security issue of migrants is nothing new, but massive inter and intra-state exodus as a threat to security has raised up as a vital issue recently after COVID-19 is declared as epidemic and shut down of all industrial and economic activities in the country. Above and beyond, these positive factors, the study aimed to assess how massive movement has created security challenges especially, in the current scenario. Generally, migrant workers face myriad challenges having poor access to health service, sometimes carried with diseases like HIV, AIDS and numerous chronic diseases without proper care and unhygienic living condition kept apart from their family. Once they fall sick, without any proper treatment, they come back to their village whereby there may be the chance of losing job or having no wage. This led to job insecurity of the migrants. Secondly, they are found engaged in hazardous work as industrial labour, quarrying, mining, binding cracker and ordinance factory without any precautionary measures, in case of sudden death or accident, no provision for insurance or rehabilitation scheme for them if any. Thirdly, out of conflict, difference and disagreement of opinion at workplace, many times they are found physical abused or openly ruthless. Fourthly, though the political people well-aware about the snags of the migrants from various sources, political elite and parties overlook these issues because they are not be used or contribute to vote bank politics. Fifthly, most migrants move to the destination place through mediator at their own risk, without registering their names in government portal, so they are not receiving any support and assistance by the concerned department of the government as registered migrants. Sixthly, migrants are found resided in slum areas in cities with poor, unhygienic, polluted areas and likely conducive to criminal activities which may not be safe for their security. Seventhly, most of the time, the girl migrants come under human trafficking, exploitation and sexual harassment by the factory managers or mediators in this area. Lastly, as majority are found labouring in unorganised sectors, they experience lots of irregularities and vulnerability in their job.

#### **V. INTER-STATE MIGRATION CRISIS AMIDST EPIDEMIC:**

In the current scenario when COVID-19 is declared as epidemic in India, mass exodus at inter-state level is reached at its peak, reason behind it is to secure themselves from disease and hunger due to shut down of the entire economic and industrial activities in the country. Recent migration crisis is viewed through security lens of different states of India. It has created great humanitarian crisis because of the mismanaged movement of the migrant labourers. The factories, mills, industries and other business activities are shut down that led to unwarranted economic strain and tension for daily wage workers, they became panic and had no time to prepare themselves for lockdown. Thousands of migratory workers from different parts of the country are engaged in these sectors, now they become unwaged and hard-pressed to uncertainty as they earn their livelihood on day-to-day basis. Majority have no alternative source of income, or means of financial support to meet their livelihood. Daily wage labourer, unskilled, skilled and marginal workers are now losing their daily bread and coming to the street with empty hands. The only worst alternative left to them is to return back to their parent states. Due to lock down, movement of train, bus and vehicle are completely restricted all over the country, inter and intra-state movements of migrants are ongoing throughout the

country. Thousands of migrants are returning back to their home at their own risk, the most heart-breaking news was that migrants were walking 1200 or 1000 kilometres with their bag and baggage without any food in the hot sun and barefoot or on top of truck or inside the empty gas tanker with women and children towards their home. Its very painful to watch this in live telecast. Daily news is highlighting on the tragic accidents with injury and loss of life. Limited bus services were on track to evacuate them from their destination state. Sources of information displayed some buses due to long route coverage faced accident as a result of which migrants were found dead in the midway. These incidents have shaken the conscience of nation. After this incidence, Shramic special train services are underway to take away the inter-state migrant workers. Chaotic scene near railway station and bus stop with thousands of migrants gathered for transportation to their villages. Sudden lockdown also severely obstructed the taxi driver, rickshaw puller, house maid, construction worker and labourer working in urban from rural area, they lose their livelihood temporarily. Migrant workers during epidemic when return their home, they are demonised as the medium to spread the epidemic, but the fact is that as they were living in slum, obviously, it was difficult for them to maintain social distancing. Again, they had no provision for health screening to make sure whether they were infected by Corona or not and sometimes lack of awareness created problem for them while coming home without any precaution.

## **VI. SECURITY ISSUES OF INTER-STATE MIGRANTS:**

1. Massive inter-state exodus from the destination states at a time with no precautionary measures and health screening during epidemic would likely to endanger their health security because social distancing was impossible for them to maintain in slum. They are living in an unhygienic condition sharing common bath room, living room, single source of drinking water collection in the slum. Mass transportation of migrants in buses and trains with heavy rush may lead to increase in the risk of contagion among other migrants. During COVID disaster these hesitant and unprepared activities instantly, impacted on their health security.
2. In India, migrant labours from the backward states move towards metros and mega cities in search of livelihood in the process of national economic integration whereby they can financially support their family and become economically empowered. But due to shut down of industrial sectors and destabilisation of economy, their income security would be at risk and it would ultimately, threat to the financial safety of their family. Besides these, massive migrant movement may cause huge labour dislocation in states, posing towards future challenge for India later on.
3. As inter-state migrants are mostly working in unorganised informal sectors which includes lot of conflict, dispute, non-payment of wage, physical abuse, accident, death and high rate of vulnerability. If any perilous situation will arise, they cannot claim or entitle social services like subsidized food, fuel and free medical facilities meant for economically vulnerable section.
4. Domestic violence and social disturbances may be increased in their parent states when migrants return home in a massive scale with no work at their disposal. Due to loss of income and work, migrants may face food insecurity and sometimes, may feel psychologically unsecured in their states.
5. Migrants are sometimes, found socially and politically excluded because they are deprived of ration or BPL card services as well as not privileged to exercise political rights in the destination state. Again, the political leaders may not be concerned to their problem as they are not contributing to the vote bank politics.
6. Existing populace in the respective area will be increasing by idle, indolent youths with growing criminal activities and scarcity of basic amenities.
7. Lack of political vision and courage to address this crisis by the political leaders may break out different criminal and terrorist activities gradually, if they were misled and misguided by the opponents within the state.
8. As the migrants are seen as the carriers of COVID-19, they are found discriminated in their villages and stayed at isolation outside the village in forest or top of the tree and restricted to enter into their houses, they may feel socially separated in their area.
9. Large migration from rural-urban and backward state to forward state or vice versa, badly impacted agricultural activities and shortage of workforce in the state which is termed as 'feminization of agriculture sector' and tightening the labour market in some circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

## VII. POSSIBLE SOLUTION OF THE CRISIS:

Migrant crisis needs special initiatives as it poses a unique challenge for an economically weaker country like India. 'The Indian Express' dt.26<sup>th</sup> May 2020, displayed in its opinion part that Covid-19 has made migrant workers' plight, state apathy visible, and migrants' vulnerability is newly visible, but not new.<sup>11</sup> Now, the question is whether the planners, scholars and policy makers are concerning this issue of migrants or overlooking this great bulk of the amorphous informal workforce. Actions taken by the states is undermining or protecting the security issue of these people in terms of socio-political inclusion. Nowadays, centre empowered the states to be responsible for the extension, enforcement of lockdown and provide relief to the migrants in the quarantine centres of the district Panchayats. States are ongoing the process of registration of their names, districts, states, statistics and travel history etc. Special arrangements are made for them to evacuate them to their native, but its not the solution. Problem will be starting aftermath of lockdown; therefore, we have to think seriously and act sincerely in the following ways.

1. As the migrants are vital part of our economy and valuable component of national workforce, unfortunate tragedy with them must be dealt with politically by making public policy to respond this issue. Welfare programmes coordinated with poverty alleviation programme, housing facility, work under MGNREGA and food security provision at war-footing way should be planned and implemented by the government.
2. Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services) Act of 1979 was implemented for migrant workers to provide employment with regular wages. Besides this, a number of programmes like Antyodaya Yojana, National Rural Livelihood Mission and MGNREGA are initiated, but these are not giving satisfactory results, so these are to be revived with proper monitoring and supervision for better result.
3. It is imperative to issue all informal labours Smart Card like 'ONE NATION ONE CARD' along with the Identity proof that would entitle them to access socio-economic benefit meant for them throughout the country.
4. Social and politically inclusion is the need of the hour. Proper training, education, orientation, skill and make them a part of decision-making and planning process by reducing social discrimination can be effective in this way.
5. Panchayat level supervision and management with the help of NGO can assist in finding out the needs and problems of the labourer in informal sector and give report to the government for appropriate action the revival of the sector. State level support and local law enforcement should provide their sustenance. Within the Panchayat the Integrated Child Development Services-Anganwadi (ANMs) be advised to expand their outreach to include migrant women and children in the scheme<sup>12</sup>.
6. The political leaders must know the gravity of the issue and respond accordingly. Framing development nexus for decreasing migration with sufficient funding and programming for them in our country, we can decrease migration to a large extent. For this purpose, government should chalk out plans for the cities and rural areas and improve sanitary condition, disposal of waste safely and recover the informal settlement with water supply, sufficient housing facilities, hospital, and toilet and clean sewerage system so that their health security can be secured.
7. Labour market authority has to monitor labour market and availability of labour and proper utilisation of labour force and make suitable planning for their engagement in different sectors and make them skilled and trained to involve in different work force within the states.
8. Greater Surveillance on the migratory workers and their social protection and security and de-humanising activities towards migrants must be included under migration policy, otherwise it may contribute to grow anti-immigrant tendency among public, media and public debate. Managing these challenges will require political skills, evidence base and analytical depth as well as maturity of political discourse that politicians, policy-makers and other participants in this important public will need to cultivate in years to come.<sup>13</sup>
9. Effective and coherent migration management policies must be designed and implemented within the state as well as outside the state with 'effective monitoring and evaluation of implementation of commitment over time'.<sup>14</sup> Registration of migrants should be compulsory in the government portal that would update migrant workers data and details of work participation and place and categorise

them into different skill, sector and gender. Registration is required for authentication, identification, trust and verification of the migrant workers in case of need.

10. Government has to resolve their problem with special initiative to resolve this crisis by direct and short-term food, cash, shelter and health support and fast track the implementation measures on local infrastructure and supply chains, technology diffusion, liquidity, employment, income and entrepreneurship generation and ensure migrant workers' wellbeing and utilisation of their potential.<sup>15</sup>

## VIII. CONCLUSION:

Within weeks of nationwide Coronavirus shutdown have triggered a mass exodus of migrant workers due to job losses, destabilised economies and exacerbated food insecurity which is magnified in populous India, largely dependent on a migrant workforce often beyond the reach of meagre social safety nets.<sup>16</sup> Kerala scores high on the migrant index because its policies relating to migrant-specific labour welfare schemes, health provisions and child policies are relatively more considerate towards internal migrants than other major migrant receiving states.<sup>17</sup> The migrants are taking care of our nation, so it's a high time to take care and look after their basics like food and shelter. It is not the only accountability of the government but we as citizens of India and part of civil society should concern and come forward with debates, discussion and innovative ideas to short out this issue for a better future of migration.

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