

# STRUGGLES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY INTERNAL MIGRANTS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

## Abstract

Migration is certainly not a new phenomenon; in fact, it has existed throughout human history since the dawn of the species. Internal migration is described as a process of crossing state borders or territory considering their push and pull forces both in destination and in origin. India, a developing nation that recognises the right to internal mobility as a basic human right, and also suffers immensely to collect data on internal migrants. Internal migrants' cross borders willingly for a number of reasons, taking distance and finances into account. Immigrants who travelled in pursuit of work, employment, or other forms of support are primarily the focus of this chapter. The number of internal migrants is expected to grow by 400 million people in 2011, although the real rate is far higher. Due to the dearth of empirical data on the hardships of migrants, they are underestimated in the aspect of policies and programme.

**Keywords-** Living Conditions; Low Wage, Social Integration; Prejudice

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

India is a developing country with highest population in the world having one of the prominent features is that divide between the rural and urban living standards, measured with reference to income, consumption and various non-monetary aspects of life (Lagakos, 2020). Large-scale internal migration within the nation leads to a diverse nation with diverse in demographic transition. In nations like India, mobility is unrestricted and is a fundamental right that has been granted to every individual. Consequently, it encouraged people of less developed countries to move internally from low developed states to more developed states or with developed infrastructure. Internal migrants are referred to as transient migrants who move frequently in quest of better living conditions, higher wages, and better employment possibilities. Some internal migrants also move to repay debt, escape from poverty, and establish upward mobility. They are not displaced people, refugees, or anyone else who was forcibly removed from their place of origin. For a variety of reasons, internal migrants travel willingly within national borders. This chapter mostly addresses immigrants who moved in search of job, employment, or other means of support.

Interstate, intrastate, interstate and inter district migration are various instances of internal migration. Interstate migrants are more vulnerable population since they live in a foreign environment while still leaving their friends and family behind. Due to their frequent changes in job considering both inside and outside the working state, interstate migrants are not a static working population. Contractors, social network, and the assistance of pioneer migrants are utilised to mobilise these migrants. As stated by Ravenstein, most of the reason for migration is economy and also says most migrants move short distance and stay within a country.

## **II. PRECARIOUS LIVING CONDITIONS**

Migrants work in a variety of industries, including construction, textiles, hospitality, and healthcare. Their living situations vary depending on their nature of work. In order to facilitate construction, migrant workers at garment sites live in a small tent, which they frequently move out of when they finish a project there (Akoijam et al; Jayaram & Varma, 2020). These homes are being built on an undeveloped construction site using scrap materials. Migrants employed in the garment industry and hospitals either reside in the dormitories provided by employees on the job site or rent homes from local residents. Families that migrate frequently rent homes, whereas young migrant travellers prefer to stay in hostels. When there are no hostel facilities available, Young single male migrants share rental rooms that are quite small, crowded, and devoid of essential amenities like drinking water and sanitary facilities (Jayaram & Varma, 2020). Sometimes it is observed that three to four households share a common toilet in the place of residence.

Migrants who live with their families do not have separate kitchens and bedrooms, living spaces without walls, where people sleep in one corner and use one corner of the room for cooking. Since they must bring their washing to the communal area, which is shared by four to five families who live next door in the same location, many homes do not have an indoor water line connection. Better living conditions have been cited by migrants as one of the main driving forces behind their departure from their country of origin. However,

compared to their place of origin, they are having a pretty happy existence despite the precarious living conditions in their new locations.

### **III. LANGUAGE AS A BARRIER FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION**

Language serves as a means of expression and aids in meeting the needs of migrants in their new environment. The lack of social integration brought on by the communication gap decreases migrants' chances of leading successful lives in their new destination and may even lead to discrimination. A person's economic integration and upward mobility may be hampered by a language barrier in their new country (Isphording & Otten, 2014). Additionally, migrants are attempting to acquire understanding the language of the region in order to survive and access resources. As an illustration, immigrants had trouble in conveying their health issues in hospitals because both the local public and private hospitals employ doctors who understand the local language.

The migrants are subject to prejudice and social exclusion in their new country because they were unable to socialise with locals because they were unable to understand their precarious circumstances. Locals perceive them as strangers in their community and even believe they take advantage of possibilities. Language barriers among migrants prevent them from participating in social activities and expanding their social networks. All of these lead to social exclusion, cultural misunderstanding, and feelings of loneliness (Gaikwad & Nellis, 2021).

### **IV. DIVERSE COUNTRY WITH RACIAL / ETHNICITY DISCRIMINATION**

One of the most significant phenomena for discrimination and other ring was physical appearance. According to a study by the Centre for Criminology, 44% of Mumbai residents said that the greatest percentage of incidents of racial discrimination targeted at persons from the north east, and that these incidents had increased since the pandemic (Lusome & Bhagat, 2020). In terms of language, colour, culture, and tradition, India is varied, yet it also proudly refers to itself as secular. Reading about instances of physical feature-based prejudice makes us aware that these people are citizens of the country, and that by not discriminating against them, the nation will become stronger. Similar to this problem, south Indians discriminate against their northern counterparts because of differences in their physical appearance, language, and culture. Aryan and Dravidian notions based on skin colour are the covert purpose behind this.

Contrary to this, northern people working in southern India, discriminate against north easterners because they have face features comparable to Chinese people and find it difficult to fit in.

### **V. PREJUDICE AS SHADOW OVER THE IMPOVERISHED PEOPLE**

Many locals have the misconception that immigrants act as disease-transmission vectors in their communities. They were treated the same way throughout the pandemic, which led to neglect both in the place of origin and in the site of arrival (Asma & Arokkiaraj, 2021). As locals offer houses at exorbitant rents and it is difficult for migrants to find suitable housing in their new location, housing becomes one of the primary challenges of prejudice.

Prejudice separates immigrants from the local population, causes a lack of social support, and prevents them from receiving health care. As a result, it might have a long-term effect on their livelihood and general wellbeing. Being in a precarious situation, migrants lack legal protection in their new home since they might not be aware of their legal options for fighting exploitation, poor pay, wage theft, and other labour rights violations.

It is crucial to address the bias that interstate migrants experience, and the government must make sure that they receive equal participation and rights in a timely manner while also guaranteeing their safety once they arrive.

## **VI. HARD WORK: DOES IT PAY OFF**

The majority of internal migrants in India are employed in lower-paying, precarious occupations in the informal sector. They receive their daily pay at the end of the week, as instead of monthly payments. They received substantially lower pay than the locals employed in the same field, and the migrants work long hours regardless of the time (Kadri, 2021). Migrants may occasionally be required to remain on campus so that they can be contacted for work early in the morning and late at night. Due to these circumstances, they were forced to put in extended hours at work without receiving overtime compensation. Since these migrants are not included in any industry payroll systems, the employee has no chance of seeing them return. In order to return to the same industry in the future, they withhold a specific amount from their salary.

## **VII. LEGAL CONCERN TOWARDS INTERNAL MIGRANTS**

In India, it is challenging to keep track of all of the internal migrants. Even though three out of every ten Indians are internal migrants, their needs are not prioritised by the government, and state measures have not succeeded in protecting them (UNESCO, 2013). Because we lack a registration system, it is impossible to track how many people move inside the borders of our country. Contractors are not registering migrant information with the state of destination as required by the laws; it is merely documented on laws. Solitary migration, in which people move alone and without agents, is another problem. Social security becomes a top priority for migrants in order to combat poverty, boost shock tolerance, develop human capital, and promote productivity in their new communities. With the intention of assisting and safeguarding individuals from poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion by offering equal opportunities, social protection can be offered in the form of money or in-kind assistance (Abishek, 2020).

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

Internal migrants' overall situation in India is precarious and the most disadvantaged members of society. In order to address the hardships of interstate migrants in terms of transport, housing, and basic requirements like food, drinking water, sanitation, etc., Pandemic has brought the problems of internal migrants to light. It is extremely difficult to ignore internal migrants when developing policies because they constitute the foundation of the country's economic prosperity. The nation should be concerned with providing better living conditions, better housing, and fundamental necessities for internal migrants. The country will be on an egalitarian development path if this is done.

Migration and urban infrastructure development are intertwined, either directly or indirectly. To take advantage of the numerous employment prospects, people from rural areas migrate mostly to urban areas (Rajan & Bhagat, 2021). Both push and pull considerations, such as wages, safety, and job security, have a significant impact on internal migrants' decisions (Lee, 1966). With the hope of achieving a good quality of living, people migrate. As opposed to their hopes of emigrating, their social and economic situation actually turns out to be worse. Internal migrants contribute to the nation's economy in terms of growth and development, as is evident. Therefore, it is crucial to develop policies and programmes that would improve their living and working conditions.

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