

EXAMINING THREE DECADES OF INTERNATIONAL OUT-MIGRATION FROM INDIA: WHAT AVAILABLE DATA CAN TELL.

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Abstract

This paper sketches a profile of international world out migration with special focus on India, over the past thirty-seven years. India has emerged as one of the leading sources of emigrants in post-1990 era. International migration has acquired a sense of urgency in India in recent years from social, economical and political perspective. Emigration flows are growing in volumes, as many young Indians from all strata of the society are migrating to other countries making the composition of emigrants' heterogeneous and complex. Main objective of paper is to examine the trend of international out migration from India in last three decades comparing it with world's migration. In this paper, data from UN estimates, NSSO⁶⁴ round and various other secondary sources have been used to examine and analyse the trend and spread of migration. As of 2017, around 17 million people born in India were living in other countries. India has been among the world's top origin countries of migrants since the United Nations (UN) started tracking migrants' origins in 1990.

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Keywords:

Migrants
Out-migration;
India;
United Nation;

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1. Introduction

The global economic integration of national economies into one global economy has not only promoted "free migration" of goods and capital but also of people, in form of international migration. International migration¹ is a universal phenomenon that touches on economic, social and security aspects affecting daily lives in an increasingly interconnected world.

In the recent World Happiness Report 2018, one of the parameter of ranking 117 countries is of happiness of the immigrants of that country, which reflects whether migrants are living a happier life or not, in which Finland secured the top position. The inclusion of this parameter showcases the importance of migration and status of migrants in the global world. Similarly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes for the first time the contribution of migration to sustainable development. 11 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contain targets and indicators that are relevant to migration or mobility. The SDGs' central reference to migration

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is made in target 10.7: to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

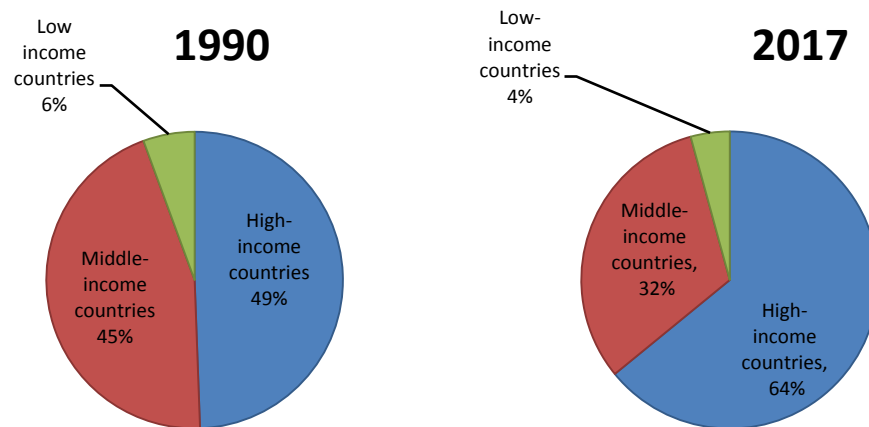
In today's modern world, spread of migration doesn't stop at country's border but it has become a reality that touches nearly all corners of the globe. Migration in the globalized world has intensified and changed, both at origin and destination (Castles et al. 2013). It is often assumed, especially by economists, that all migrants are moving for economic reasons due to lack of job or business opportunities. In fact, international migration to Western countries for the last few decades has not been due to economic reasons but for family reunion, for marriage (now growing in importance), of other dependents, students and asylum seekers (OECD, 2003). The tendency of migrating from poor countries has been self-perpetuating and accelerating through chain migration, which has resulted in growth of ethnic minority groups in wealthy countries but this phenomenon is generally mentioned nowhere. One of the most important theoretical propositions advanced regarding the international migration in the recent years is "Cumulative causation" (Massey 1990, 1994). This theory posits that as migratory experience grows within a sending community, the likelihood that other community members will initiate a migratory trip increases. Growing immigrant populations can make substantial changes to the population and society of the receiving country, creating in major urban areas self-sufficient segregated transnational settlements which are cultural outposts of the sending society, greatly facilitating the in- flow of new immigrants.

2. Trends and Pattern of International Out-Migration

The number of International migrants worldwide has continued to grow over the past thirty-seven years, rising from 153 millions in 1990 to 258 million in 2017. During the period of 2005-2010, the annual growth rate of migrant stock accelerated, reaching 3 per cent. Since 2010, it has slowed, falling to around 2.4 per cent per year. Recently from 2015-2017 the annual rate of change in migrant stock is 2.0 per cent. High-income countries are major hosts of these international migrants. As of 2017, 165 million of International migrants resided in high-income countries, 81 million lived in middle-income countries and 10 million resided in low-income countries. Thus, this reflects that majority of the world's migrants live in high-income countries. Nearly two-third of the world International migrants populate in high-income countries. This can be seen in the following pie charts.

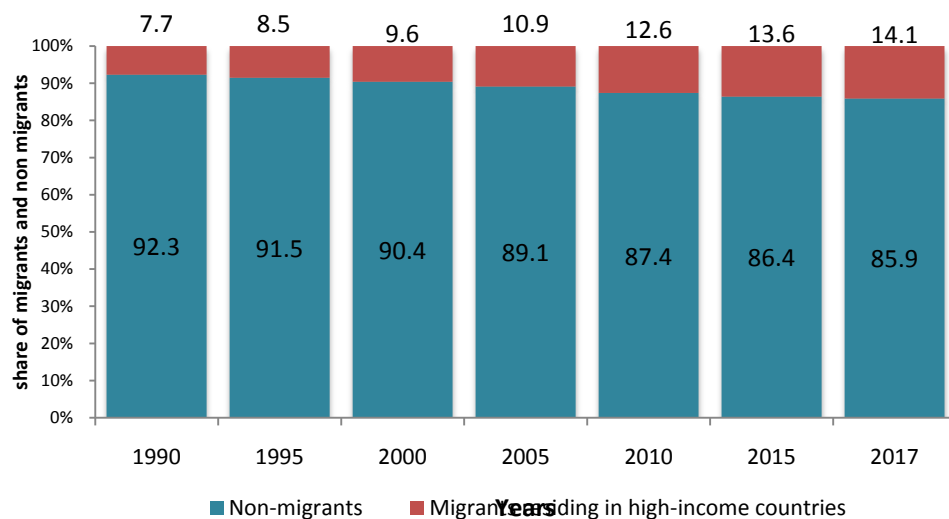
As it is quite prominent from the above chart that high percentage of international migrants resides in high-income countries. In 1990, 49 percent of international migrants resided in high-income countries, which has now increased to 64 percent in 2017. In addition to this, in 1990, 7.7 percent of international migrants of total world population lived in high-income countries as compared to 9.6 percent in 2000 and 12.6 percent in 2010. This shows a significant rise in International migrants residing in high-income countries. This can be shown in the following figure.

Figure 1: Change in the distribution (percent) of stock of international migrants by countries of destination classified by income groups, 1990-2017



Source: UN estimates, Department of economic and social affairs. Population division (various years)

Figure 2: Share of international migrants in the total population of countries of destination (percent) in countries classified by income categoriesⁱⁱ, 1990-2017



Source: UN estimates (from various reports).

It is already evident that higher proportion of international migrants to the total world population is residing in high-income countries. Where as an interesting fact can be noted that share of emigrants residing in middle- income and low-income countries has slightly fell in the succeeding years. It has slightly declined in middle-income countries i.e. from 1.7 percent in 1990 to 1.4 percent in 2017. Similarly in low- income countries, proportion of international migrants declined from 2.6 percent in 1990 to 1.6 percent in 2017. So the above figure points out that there has been more movement of people toward the high-income countries as they might find these countries more suitable for finding good job opportunities and higher standard of living. There can be several economic and non economic factors responsible for the movement of migrants to high-

income countries i.e. more job opportunities, more economic and political stability, higher wages, higher standard of living, community support etc. and these factors can induce the decisions of people to migrate in high-income countries compared to middle-income or low-income countries. Similarly, the proportion of international migrants to total migrants in developed and less developed nations has increased significantly.

This table highlights that major proportion of world's migrants are from Asia region comprising of 41 percent of world's migrants in 2017. Europe has second largest number of migrants (61 millions) with 23.7 percent followed by Latin America and Caribbean (14.6 per cent) and Africa (14.1 per cent). Under Asia region, India is the largest country of origin of international migrants (17 million), followed by Mexico (13 million). Other countries of origin with large migrant population includes Russian Federation (11 million), China (10 million), Bangladesh (7 million), Syrian Arab Republic (7 million) and Pakistan and Ukraine (6 million each) in 2017.

Figure 4: Distribution of international migrants by share of place of origin (in thousands), 2017

	International migrants by origin	Percentage of International migrants
Africa	36,266	14.1
Asia	105,684	41.0
Europe	61,191	23.7
Latin America and Caribbean	37,720	14.6
Northern America	4,413	1.7
Oceania	10,560	0.7
Total	257,715	100.0

Source: UN estimates.

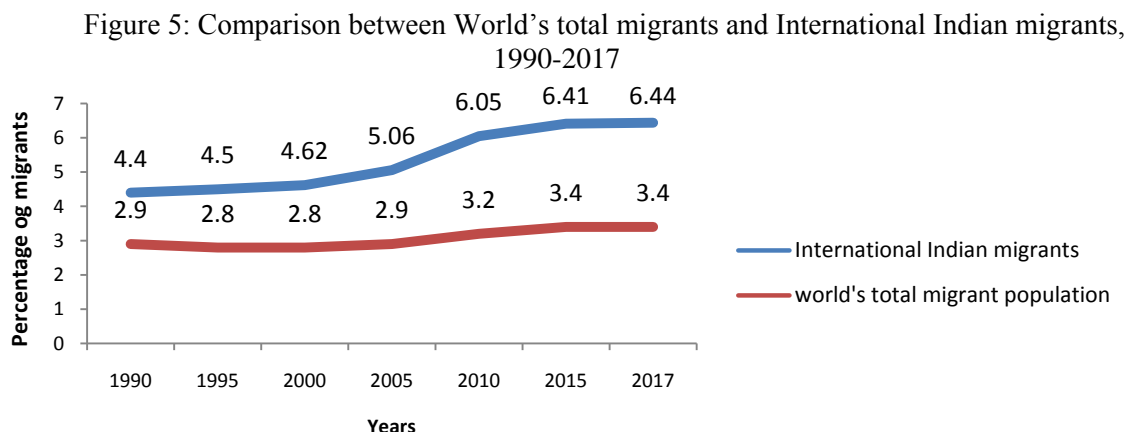
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3. Indian Scenario

India is considered as a country of birth with largest number of international out-migrants. This paper shows how India has emerged as one of the leading sources of emigrants in post-1990 era. International migration has acquired a sense of urgency in India in recent years. Emigration flows are growing in volumes, as many young Indians from all strata of the society are migrating to other countries making the composition of emigrants' heterogeneous and complex. Basically, people living in one part of the world move to other parts for the improvement in their livelihood. There are number of reasons for migration, for instance, war, political instability in the home country etc. Amongst all the reasons one of the most important economic reasons is fetching higher income through the process of migration. There are several theories focusing on why people migrate from one country to another. Other drivers that affect the decision to emigrate, are family and friendship networks. The most influential theoretical migration framework is E.G. Ravenstein's laws of migration in 19th century (Ravenstein, 1885, 1889; Lee 1966) which attempted to explain why international migration occurs. The Push-Pull theory of migration traced out the economic factors of migration in the sending country as well as in the receiving country. The push factors of migration include demographic pressure, high unemployment and low living standards in the home

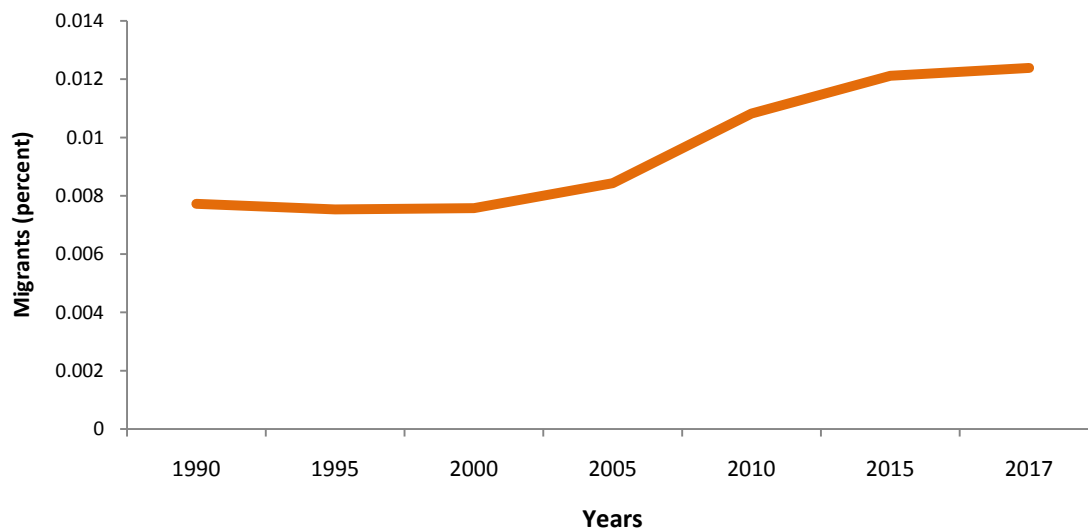
country and the pull factors include the demand for labour, promising economic opportunities, higher quality of life and political freedom. Any type of Migration, whether forced or voluntary, documented or undocumented, can be explained in terms of push-pull factors. Push factors identifies the negative characteristics operating at the center of origin whereas pull factors attributes to the positive characteristics at the center of destination (Nisar Ahmad et al. 2008). The economics of migration determines that the expectation of a higher income abroad is the main cause of decisions to emigrate. There are also other non-economic reasons such as political prosecution, unstable economy, ethnic discrimination, existence of social networks who have migrated previously to a specific country etc. exerts an important influence on the decision to migrate (Solimano, 2002). The magnitude and direction of international migration flows were influenced by the following factors: (a) Income differentials between sending and receiving countries for a given skill; (b) state economic prospects in both sending and receiving countries; (c) Immigration policies; (d) Social Network effects; (e) Costs of migration; and (g) Geographical distance and proximity. Empirical analysis of migration flow (Hatton and Williamson, 1998; Borjas, 2001) showed that family, friends and ethnic/national networks constituted an important support for migrants. These factors played an important role in their choice for the selection of destinations. The impact of geographical, cultural, and demographic factors as well as the role played by changes in destination countries' migration policies (Mayda 2007).

As of 2017, around 17 million people born in India were living in other countries. India has been among the world's top origin countries of migrants since the United Nations (UN) started tracking migrants' origins in 1990. "The number of international Indian migrants has more than doubled over the past 25 years, growing about twice as fast as the world's total migrant population" (Pew Research Center). This relation can be explained in the following figure.



Source: UN estimates (various years)

Above figure emphasis that world's total migrant population has increased to 3.4 per cent as compared to International Indian out-migrants i.e. 6.4 per cent. This graph validates the above statement that out-migrants from India have increased at almost twice the rate as compared to the increase in world's migrants. But if we calculate the proportion of total Indian out migrants in India's total population from 1990-2017, we can infer that as the migrants are rising at high pace, population of India is also increasing simultaneously as a result proportion of Indian migrants in total population remains more or less stagnating. This can be shown in the following figure.

Figure 6: Trend of Indian out-migrants in total population of India, 1990-2017

Source: UN estimates(various issues).

Above figure shows the population adjusted migration rate of India from 1990-2017. The probability of out migrants from India is more or less same. There has been very slight change in the share of Indian out-migrants in its population. Also, it is interesting to note that more Indian out-migrants are moving towards the less developed regions instead of more developed regions. Contrary to world migration trend of moving to more developed regions, Indian out-migrants prefers less developed regions due to several reasons like feasible facilities of visa, less travel expenses and more demand for the labour etc. Number of International Indian migrants residing in more developed countries were 1.2 million in 1990 which has risen to 2.1 millions in 2000, 3.8 millions in 2010 and 4.7 millions in 2017 whereas number of out-migrants residing in less developed countries were 5.4 millions in 1990 which has risen to 5.8 millions in 2000, 9.5 millions in 2010 and 11.8 millions in 2017.i.e 2.5 times of more developed region.

4. Implications

International out migration has significant impact not only on migrating individuals but also the economy, polity and society of home as well as destination country. India retained the top position as recipient of remittances with its diaspora sending about USD 69 billion back home in 2017. Apart from this, migration has also led to the improvement in diasporic relations between the nations, enhanced new technologies and skills, promoted human rights etc. Migration is a term that encompasses a wide variety of movements and situations involving people of all walks of life and backgrounds. More than ever before, migration played an important role in deepening globalization and has intertwined with geopolitics, trade and cultural exchange, and provides opportunities for states, businesses and communities to benefit enormously. However, it is also an acknowledged fact that not all migration occurs in positive circumstances. In the recent years an increase in migration and displacement has been observed due to frequent occurring of conflicts, persecutions, environmental degradation along with a profound lack of human security and opportunity. This heterogeneity nature of migration has often led to certain confusions in understanding the migration trend.

5. Conclusion

In the migration process it has been observed that beyond a certain threshold the marginal social and economic return from migration cease to be positive. Numerous regional, national and global initiatives are taken and are slowly helping, despite significant obstacles like human trafficking, illegal migration etc are still prevailing. Therefore, migration aspect should be less concerned with whether the phenomenon is 'good' or 'bad', but about how migration policy can be used constructively to achieve optimal rates of migration. Due to the rising trends, levels and spread of out migration, it has become an important aspect of for all national and international policy makers to formulate the required policies and strategies on migration. The above analysis of three decadal data of out-migration give an insight regarding trend and pattern of international out migration and how economic and non economic migration perpetuates migration.

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ⁱUnited Nations defines international migration as “ movement of persons who leave their country of origin, or the country of habitual residence, to establish themselves either permanently or temporarily in another country where as an International migrant is a person who is living in a country other than his or her country of birth”(UNESCO 2017).

ⁱⁱ UN has classified the countries by income groups based on 2016 GNI per capita from the World Bank.