

LABOUR MIGRATION AND ITS EFFECT ON URBAN INDIA – AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Normally migration forms major livelihood opportunities for the people who do not have regular source of income to their own respective places. Although various literatures highlights on the fact that migration may happen between one rural area to another rural area or rural to urban area, but the dominance of rural to urban migration is more dominant. This may be the preconceive notion of the migrants that job opportunities are higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. Thus the movement of people to nearest urban location creates huge burden of labour force which may impact the growth of the urban sector in a negative way. The paper tries to highlights on this particular issue called problems of urbanization as a result of rural to urban migration.

Key words- labour migration, urban area, and rural area

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Introduction:

Urbanization is a phenomenon which should be treated with caution. The basic debate is whether urbanization is good or bad. It depends on the situation, because if an urban location has unutilized capacity then excess movement of people from low prosperity area to that area will be inevitable but that may not be the case all the time. Sometimes, it is observed, mostly in developing countries that due to inadequate infrastructure and low living standard people are moving towards nearest urban location for better opportunities. But the same areas don't have the capacity to absorb the excess labour force, because of the burden of its own population. This creates a situation which we termed as urbanization. If this can't be controlled in a systematic manner then in the near future the entire civic and other urban facilities will deteriorate. This is a critical situation and has a direct link with migration phenomenon. So, while we are discussing the concept of rural urban migration, problem of urbanization can't be ignored under any circumstances.

It is believed that due to specific government policy and unequal growth of rural and urban areas, the problem of urbanization aggravated. Not only that the specific pull has factor of migration often attracted people without knowing the consequences of the same. Along with pull factors, push factors which discussed earlier are equally important in this regard. Thus, identification of the core problem is very crucial as most of the government wants to reduce the excess pressure on urban areas. One thing which can be done is to create an environment for which rural people are moving towards urban areas. But creating a job related infrastructure is not an easy task. It takes some time; moreover it requires proper exposure of the migrants towards those initiatives. But other than this no other alternatives left, which can resolve the problem of migration. Along with this improvement in communication and transportation are also equally important in this regard, as it simply makes the process of flow simpler.

It is often argued that low investment in agricultural sector, inadequate growth of formal urban sectors, high investment in creating infrastructure and liberalization of economy often proved negative for a country like India, where it subsequently reduces the purchasing power of the people by reducing the income opportunities in various sectors where growth prospects are there. This is not the case of urban areas alone, rural areas are also equally facing the heat in this regard. And the ultimately end result is poverty and unemployment.

Migration often termed as risk diversification strategy, on the other hand it often considers as a means of foregone skills, yield and income for those, who migrate to other destination from the place of origin (Mendola, May, 2005). Rapid migration creates the problem of urbanization. This process of movements of general population from a less developed areas to urban areas in search of better prospects and improved standard of living, is termed as migration. It is generally, believed that urban sectors provide jobs, good education and health care facilities and other services more efficiently and effectively as compared to non urban areas. This also According to UN study in 1995, 10 of the 15 World's largest cities will be in Asia, which excludes Japan and out of these 3 will be in India. This shows the rapid urbanization is a major concern for policymakers in India. Not only that, on an average 50% of the World's population representing youth and children, living in cities and thus excludes from basic requirements of survival.

The reason for higher rate of urbanization can be categorized as natural increase of population, migration and inclusion of new areas under 'urban'. Kundu (2003) estimates that the percentage contribution of natural increase and new towns declined from 61.3 per cent and 9.4 per cent, respectively, in the 1980s to 59.4 per cent and 6.2 per cent, respectively, in the 1990s. In their estimates Bhagat & Mohanty (2009) found that the contributions of natural increase have declined from 62.3 per cent in 1981–1991 to 57.6 per cent in 1991–2001. The contribution of new towns also declined from 17.2 per cent to 12.3 per cent, while that of internal migration increased from 18.7 per cent to 20.8 per cent. The residual component (jurisdictional change) contributed 1.8 per cent and 9.2 per cent to the urban growth in these two decades.

The table below indicates the rural urban population distribution in percentage terms during three census years, viz. 1901, 1951 & 2011.

Rural Urban Population Distribution in India (1901, 1951, 2011)

Census Year	% of Population in Rural Areas	% of Population in Urban Areas
1901	89.2	10.8
1951	82.7	17.3
2011	68.8	31.2

Source: Census 2011 – Provisional Population Totals – India

The table clearly indicates rising pressure of urbanization. It is visible that during first 50 years (1901 to 1951) the percentage decline in rural population was 6.5% and this population has shifted its base in urban areas. As compared to this, during 1951 to 2011, this population adjustment from rural to urban areas is more than double (13.9% swing of population from rural areas to urban areas).

Urbanization & Decadal Growth

Year	Total population	No. of Towns and UAs	Urban Population	Share of Urban Population to Total Population (%)	Decadal Growth of Urban Population (%)	Index of Urban Population (Base 1951 = 100)
1951	36.11	2843	6.24	17.3	41.4	100
1961	43.92	2365	7.89	18.0	26.4	126
1971	54.81	2590	10.91	19.9	38.2	175
1981	68.33	3378	15.95	23.3	46.1	256
1991	84.63	3768	21.76	25.7	36.4	349
2001	102.86	5161	28.61	27.8	31.3	458

Source: Planning Commission Report on Urban Development for 11th Five Year Plan (2007 – 2012)

Although the table suggests that rate of growth of urbanization is slowing down but in absolute terms the number is increasing over the years, creating tremendous pressure on urban areas. It has also led to deterioration in the quality of city environments. In several cities, the problems of traffic congestion, pollution, poverty, slums, crime, and social unrest are assuming alarming proportions. However, there is also another side of population concentration in cities. Large cities are the engines of economic growth and generators of resources for national economic development.

Characteristics of Migrants

Across the class we can find people are migrating but the reason for migration and their nature if jobs are varies. Normally people of backward classes or poor are migrating more than the other two extreme classes, i.e. rich and extreme poor. It is understandable that why rich people are not migrating, but when we see that extremely poor people are also not migrating the logic is quite different. Actually, the situation is like that, they are so poor that they often not in a position to

arrange their cost of movement and initial settlement cost in place of destination. The National Commission for Rural Labour Report, 1991, suggests that a large number of migrants are basically those who have less landholding. For them seasonal migration is the best option as they are not in a position to arrange moving cost and subsequently staying cost in urban location during initial stage of migration. In terms of education, it is observed that rate of migration is high among highly educated as well as least educated individuals. But for these two extreme groups nature of job is different after migration. Those who are highly educated normally get into well paid formal sector job, thus improves the standard of living. But for least educated the reverse is the truth. This group of migrants landed up in urban informal sector job, where neither the working condition is good nor do they have the job security. Not only that, most of the time they suffer from lack of access to basic amenities and labour market discrimination. The poor migrants once enter in the urban job markets face large uncertainties in the potential job market. They also incur the risk of high job search cost. This risk is increased if the distance of place of destination increases from place of origin.

How & Why People Move

Broadly movement of the migrants can be divided as international or national movement. It is understandable most of the international migrations are happening for skilled people. But for unskilled labourers the international movement is nil, which is also not the case. Lots of people do move out of the country to odd jobs when prospect of earning is quite high or their own community or relatives are there in the destination country. Whatever may be the case, it is apparently true that most of the migration is happening within the territorial boundary of the country.

When we are focusing on why people are moving it is quite obvious that most migrants, internal and international, reap gains in the form of higher incomes, better access to education and health, and improved prospects for their children. Surveys of migrants report that most are happy in their destination, despite the range of adjustments and obstacles typically involved in moving. Once established, migrants are often more likely than local residents to join unions or religious and other groups. Yet there are trade-offs and the gains from mobility are unequally distributed.

People displaced by insecurity and conflict face special challenges. Moreover it is a proven fact that people are moving to a better place on their own and not only that in various literature it is

observed that people generally move from a region with a lower level of human development to a region with a higher level of human development. Because human expectation is also higher and perceived expectation forces people to take this decision.

Conclusion:

The theoretical analysis shows that although people are moving towards urban areas for a better standard of living but the same may not be achieved over the time period. The main reason is that every area has a specific capacity and if that exceeds existing facilities may not be adequate to provide all the desired benefits for survival. The huge flow of population, thus, is creating tremendous pressure on the urban counterpart in this regard. Not only that neither these labour migrants are able to absorb the local culture nor they are in a position to get basic amenities to maintain the livelihood. The condition in work place is also worse. Most of them are engaged in informal sector which neither provides job security nor provides health working environment. The wage distortion is another area which failed to fulfill their objective of earning more during migration process.

Whether urbanization is good or bad will remain a debatable topic but it can be understandable that it will work positively only when existing infrastructure is sufficient to absorb the excess flow of people and they are in a position to earn decently. If this condition is not fulfilled then obviously the movement will create a negative impact on the urban sector.

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