

## The Life of Labour: Women and Migration in India



(Image source: Frontline)

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## Lead Essay

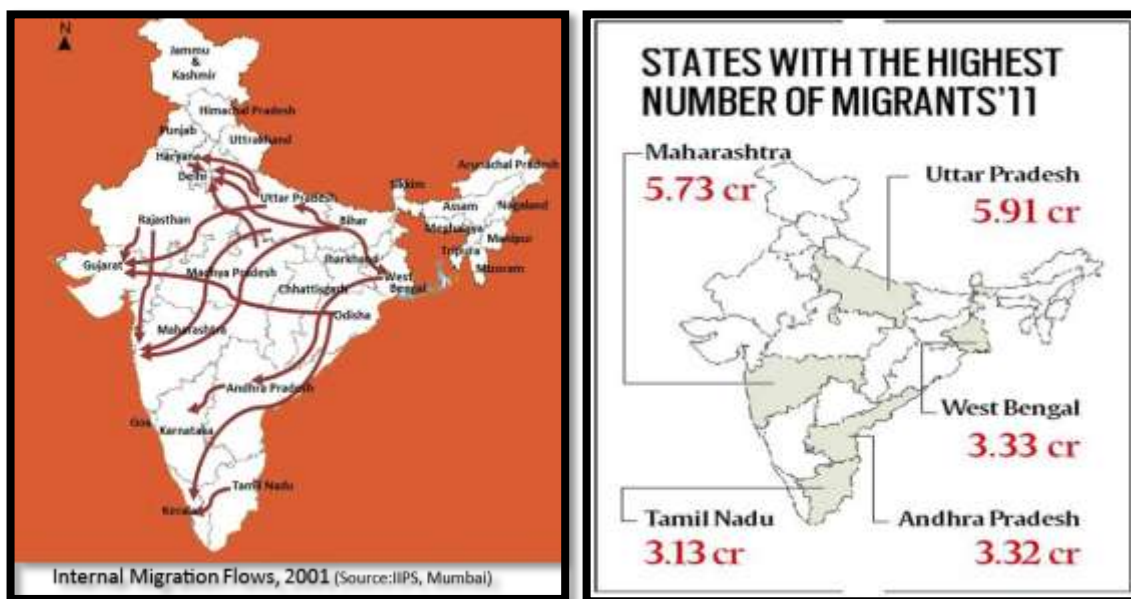
### The Life of Labour: Women and Migration in India

#### Introduction

*According to 2011 census, over 45.36 crore migrants in India, as compared to 37.8% in 2001, every third citizen of the country is a migrant. Of these, around 70 per cent are women, who apart from marriage are now migrating for work and education. However, despite playing a major role in the development of our economy, the women labor workforce participation in India seeing a rapid decline.*

Migration is the movement of people across a specified boundary for the purpose of establishing a new or semi-permanent residence and is the natural outcome of deprivation, inequality, poverty and unemployment especially in the rural areas. The UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants defines a migrant worker as a "person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national." In simpler terms, migrants are those people who make choices about when to leave and where to go, even though these choices are sometimes extremely constrained. The makers of the Indian Constitution gave sanctity to such movements by guaranteeing freedom of movement and freedom to settle in any part of the territory of India as a fundamental right of all citizens. This helps to integrate the country and secure its unity by removing internal barriers against movement and settlement. More people migrate from less affluent states and districts, and therefore the most affluent states receive the largest number of migrants. The reason given is the influence of the "Push" and "Pull" factors that influence choices of migration. 'Push' and 'Pull' factors are largely used in the context of rural-urban migration i.e. internal migration. "Push" factors are those that make people want to leave the place where they are living. Similarly, "Pull" factors are those that make people want to come to a certain place.

#### Internal Migration as seen in India



(Internal migration data in 2001 and 2011)

#### Types of Migration

Migration in India can be of following four types- rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to rural and urban to urban, out of which rural to rural has been dominant. Based on distance, the streams can also be classified as intra-district, intra-state and inter-state. The

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study of different trends of migration in different parts of the country helps in understanding the dynamics of the society. The recent information on migration level (2015) reveals that even though the bulk of labor migration within India is temporary and circular in nature, and driven by persistent rural and urban poverty, migration is now part of the normal livelihood strategy of the poor as it helps reduce poverty.

Table B.1: Reasons and Streams of Intercensal Migration (as % share of each stream)

	Work and Business		Education		Marriage		Family related		Others		Total	
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011
Rural to Rural	9.3	6.4	1.9	2.7	91.2	99.0	19.4	24.1	8.3	7.7	96.3	47.4
Rural to Urban	29.9	24.3	4.9	4.8	21.6	22.4	34.5	40.6	8.8	7.9	21.8	22.1
Urban to Rural	14.5	8.9	3.0	2.7	28.1	25.0	42.9	10.6	11.4	7.3	8.6	7.9
Urban to Urban	21.8	17.8	4.3	3.4	21.9	18.4	42.6	47.9	9.5	12.9	15.2	22.8
Total	100.0	100.0	3.0	3.3	44.4	39.1	27.8	35.6	6.8	8.9	100.0	100.0

Source: Census of India 2001, 2011. Each of the streams, e.g., rural to rural, will add to 100 for 2001 and 2011, subject to rounding errors. The first two columns show the share of each stream in total migration.

### Gender Dimension of Migration

1. Out of 309 million internal migrants, 70.7 per cent are women (218 million) (Census of India 2001)
2. The most prominent reason given for women's migration is marriage – cited by 91.3 per cent of women in rural areas and 60.8 per cent of women in urban areas (NSSO 2007–2008)
3. Female migrants mostly belong to the rural stream (75.6 per cent) and exhibit greater concentration in intra-district and inter-district migration (66.9 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively) as compared with inter-state migration (10.1 per cent)
4. While longer-term migration flows tend to be male-dominated, circular or seasonal flows in India—which are most prevalent among the poorest and tribal populations—tend to have a more even balance of men and women. Female migrants are less well represented in regular jobs and more likely to be self-employed than non-migrant women
5. A large number of migrant women and girls are seen opting for domestic work. 92% of the 20 million domestic workers are women and children and 20% of these females are under 14 years of age.

In case of internal migration in India, the number of migrants by place of last residence in India was 314.5 million in 2001. The figure increased to 453.6 million in 2011, showing an addition of 139 million, an average of about 14 million migrating every year. It was observed earlier that the reason for migration in case of males and females vary significantly. Work or employment among males and marriage among females are the sole reasons for migration. The second important reason for migration given is moving along with family members in case of both males and females. Although, in recent times, we can identify a change in the migration trend with women migration not only because of marriage but also in search of better livelihood for themselves and their families. One such significant finding that emerges from the two (55th and 64th) of the NSS rounds is that, factors such as low income and low literacy are the common determinants of migration for both sexes but low level of social status is found to be associated significantly only for men's migration. On the contrary, marriage is not only the most critical factor for women migration but also high income, high literacy and higher social status are found as some major pull factors associated with women's migration in urban India

However, as an economy transforms from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy, there is a decline in participation of female labor force. This is attributed to the shift from family-based production to large-scale production in industrial units. The National Sample Survey (NSS) 2007-08 data for India shows that the labor force participation rates of women aged 25-54 (including primary and subsidiary status) have stagnated at about 26-28% in urban areas, and fallen substantially from 57% to 44% in rural areas, between 1987 and 2011. Income effect, education effect and the problem of underestimation, has an adverse impact on the female labor market in the whole process. However, social and cultural factors remain the principal driving factors of keeping women outside the labor force.

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### Determinants of employment status

Women's labor market participation is determined to a large extent by caste, religion, marital status, and other sociocultural norms, which operate at multiple levels in society and restrict women's mobility and access to wage employment in the formal labour market.

1. Women who are primarily responsible for household duties and reproduction which falls outside the purview- of labour as it is understood in technical and definitional terms
2. Women's marital status also influences their participation rates significantly. Further, male members of the household generally decide on what type of job women should take up.
3. Restrictions are imposed on women's movements outside the household and also discouraged by the husband and in-laws. In 2009–10, among urban females with graduate degrees, those who were reported to be attending to domestic duties were close to 60 per cent, which was almost twice the corresponding proportion for rural females with primary or middle-school education
4. Occupational segregation appears to play an important role in holding women back. Women in India tend to be grouped in certain industries and occupations such as basic agriculture, sales and elementary services, and handicraft manufacturing. The problem is that these industries/occupations have not seen employment growth in recent years, which has put a brake on female employment growth. Female employment in India grew by 8.7 million between 1994 and 2010, but estimates suggest that it could have increased more than three times that figure if women had equal access to employment in the same industries and occupations as their male counterparts
5. Religion and social status also play an important role in determining outcomes. The likelihood of Muslim women being in the labour force and in various possible outcomes is lower in both rural and urban areas. In contrast, being a woman from a Scheduled Tribe (ST) increases the probability of being self-employed by about 12 per cent in rural areas and by 3 per cent in urban areas. In addition, being widowed/divorced increases the probability of being in one of the employment status (self-employed, regular salaried and casual labour) in both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, being married reduces the probability to be employed in regular salaried work by 10 per cent.

### The Impact of Migration on women

*According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 53 million women and girls around the world are employed as domestic workers in private households. They clean, cook, care for children, look after elderly family members and perform other care giving essential tasks for their employers.*

Regardless of the duration of their stay, majority of poor migrants who work in the informal sector, where apart from major issues like lack of identity which is linked to basic rights like education, food security, proper housing, voting, accompanied with matters related to working wages, poor working conditions long working hours further enhances their struggle for survival. In industrial sector, women migrant workers have not been able to enjoy better jobs within the industry and they have no scope for upward mobility. The failure on the part of the Indian Government to consider migration as a development issue results into a fragmented policy that further excludes the internal migrants from the present scenario (for instance the ineffective Inter State Migrant Worker Act, 1979 which articulates ideal working conditions for interstate migrants, but lacking provisions for enforcement, it has not been used to create a better policy environment in practice). Thus it is safe to say that female migration is an area which needs further exploration and research to understand it better.

Changes in labour demands, the increasing vulnerability of women, the conflicting social demands and the economic compulsions may all be the critical factors affecting the lives of migrant women often resulting in under representation of women migrants in terms of access to basic civil rights and social entitlements, and are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse and may get pushed into sex work, either by coercion or to supplement their earnings. On the other hand, the left-behind women face the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, brought back by migrating husbands. While migration, poverty alleviation and labour come within the ambit of a number of existing laws related to work, discrimination against women, and human rights, the legislation is not effectively applied and hardly ever in the case of women migrants. Since most of the female migrants are moving to cities are either illiterate or semi-literate, they are subject to domestic violence and are unable to negotiate for their rights as compared to men. Hence, there is an urgent need to reform the migration policies which focuses on the empowerment and development of women in terms of education and income. Female education is the key for empowerment of women in terms of making the decision to migrate as well as getting a better job at the destination.

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### The Way Ahead

*“All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well – being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity of economic security and equal opportunity” - Declaration of Philadelphia 1944*

A basic overview of existing literature makes clear that in spite of the contributions made by the women migrants to India's economy, the social protections available to them still remains uneven. This is because women are not been given equal importance as compared to men in migration, since they are still not received as equal actors worthy of being accounted for. Thus a gender perspective on migration is imperative, since women have significantly different migration motivations, patterns, options and obstacles from men. In order to achieve that, the first step should be to revise concepts and categories used in the design of the Census and National Sample Surveys to enable data collection on multiple reasons for women's migration that will help in formulating effective policies to avoid further gender discrimination and establish an inclusive society.

Categorized as non-workers, these women largely suffer due to lack of access to both civil rights and social benefits such as welfare entitlements and often find themselves in vulnerable situations since the indications are that migration in the contemporary period has led to relatively limited diversification of female occupations. Measures are hence, needed in the following areas:

- (1) Measures in regard to health, safety and welfare for women
- (2) Social security measures for women
- (3) Wage protection for women

Hence, women's labour force participation and access to decent work are important and necessary elements of an inclusive and sustainable development process. Moreover, reducing gender barriers to decent work is fundamental to promoting women's economic empowerment. Given that inequality is at the core of the caste system, the Government must also acknowledge that the historically exploited castes and disadvantaged communities, especially scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and landless backward castes, are more vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. Apart from that, the States too should undertake efforts to prevent internal migration, through schemes such as rural employment programs, amending laws for better inclusion of migrants' workers in the development process and grant those equal rights and status the rights they deserve along with normal citizens.

### Prepared by

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## Headline

### Stagnant employment growth

(Vinoj Abraham, *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 23, 2017)

Abstract: Employment growth in India slowed down drastically during the period 2012 to 2016, after a marginal improvement between March 2010 and March 2012, according to the latest available employment data collected by the Labour Bureau. There was an absolute decline in employment during the period 2013–14 to 2015–16, perhaps happening for the first time in independent India. The construction, manufacturing and information technology/business process outsourcing sectors fared the worst over this period.

Read more: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/38/commentary/stagnant-employment-growth.html>

Date accessed: 26.09.2017

## Governance & Development

### ***POLITICS & GOVERNANCE***

#### **Sitaram Yechury opposes simultaneous elections, says idea is aimed at ushering in presidential system**

(PTI, *Firstpost*, 25 September 2017)

CPM leader Mr Yechury has voiced his disapproval of the concept of one nation one election proposed by the Modi government, stating that it is undemocratic and is aimed at virtual change in system by ushering in a presidential form of government. He is also of the opinion that rights of the elected bodies are being undermined to advance the government's agenda. The government and several other regional parties however have agreed to the idea since they believe it will curb vote bank politics and enhance the pace of developmental activities.

Read more: <http://www.firstpost.com/politics/sitaram-yechury-opposes-simultaneous-elections-says-idea-is-aimed-at-ushering-in-presidential-system-4078127.html>

Date Accessed: 25.09.2017

### ***DEVELOPMENT***

#### **Modi launches Rs 16000 crore Saubhagya scheme for household electrification**

(Vikas Shoot, *The Hindu*, 25 September 2017)

Stating that welfare of the poor is the ultimate goal of the BJP government, Narendra Modi announced a 16000 crore scheme for providing free electricity to 4 crore households across the country. This is a part of the PM Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana which was launched to give rural India access to free electricity. Modi also used this platform to highlight the achievements of his government through various schemes like reduced prices of stent and knee replacement, bank accounts and insurance coverage for more than 15 crore poor people.

Read more: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/modi-launches-free-power-scheme-for-poor/article19752583.ece>

Date Accessed: 25.09.2017

### ***GOVERNMENT***

#### **Despite the hype, states don't have enough to spend on welfare schemes**

(Bharat Dogra, *The Wire*, September 25, 2017)

Contrary to popular assertion that amount of resources available to state governments for welfare schemes have improved after the implementation of the 14th Finance Commission, the reality on the ground suggests otherwise. Since 2015-16, the share of central taxes meant for states was raised from 32% to 42% on the basis of the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission. However, this was accompanied by other less publicised changes, which negated this increase to a considerable extent. As the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) pointed out in its analysis of the 2015-16 budget, at the same time as this increase, the overall magnitude of central assistance to states for plan spending fell sharply from Rs 3.3 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 1.96 lakh crore in the budget estimate for 2015-16.

Read more: <https://thewire.in/181081/budget-welfare-programmes-states/>

Date accessed: 26.09.2017

## Governance & Development

### ***AGRICULTURE***

#### **After Vedanta victory, Niyamgiri hills Adivasis turn to another challenge – reviving native crops**

(Abhijit Mohanty, *Scroll.in*, September 24, 2017)

The troubles of Dongria Kondhs of Odisha extend beyond Vedanta. Their once self-sufficient agricultural system that relied on local resources has now been eroded by the introduction of commercial high-yielding crop varieties, which has resulted in the loss of numerous landraces with important traits. The traditional crops such as millets, pulses and tubers, besides uncultivated foods from the forests that ensured the Dongrias' food and nutritional security since millennia, are on the verge of extinction, which has also led to an increased dependence of the Dongrias on commercial seed suppliers.

Read more: <https://scroll.in/article/851550/after-vedanta-victory-niyamgiri-hills-adivasis-turn-to-another-challenge-reviving-native-crops>

Date accessed: 26.09.2017

## India and the World

### **India calls for global action to counter use of Internet for radicalisation**

(PTI, *The Hindu*, 23 September 2017)

Pushing for an uniform strategy to combat the rising threat of terrorism, the Indian Foreign Secretary has called on the global community to recognise and tackle the use of internet by terrorists for radicalisation and financing. India also welcomed the development of Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism since it believes that combating terrorist usage of internet needs the support of all the stakeholders and not just the governments. Some of the suggested initiatives that this forum highlighted includes exploring artificial intelligence and machine learning to accelerate the identification of terrorist content, building on their hash sharing database of known terrorist content for detection and prevention of terrorist abuse of the online platforms.

Read more: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-calls-for-global-action-to-counter-use-of-internet-for-radicalisation/article19741007.ece>

Date Accessed: 25.09.2017

## ***INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS***

### **India walks a fine line as US Iran spar over nuclear deal**

(Suhasini Haidar, *The Hindu*, 22 September 2017)

India is in a precarious situation involving its ties with the Middle eastern countries due to the constant rifts and shifting alliances in the volatile regions. While ties with the Saudi led gulf bloc is important to India, bilateral relations with Iran are crucial at this stage due to the ongoing Chabahar Project. The Iran-USA relations also affect India's diplomacy with both these countries. USA's certificate to Iran on compliance with the JCPOA will be vital in determining nuclear deal between the two countries and will indirectly impact India's projects and trade in the region due to US pressure to reframe its relations with Tehran.

Read more: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-walks-a-fine-line-as-us-iran-spar-over-nuclear-deal/article19733664.ece>

Date Accessed: 25.09.2017

## Opinion

### Those independent UP girls

(Seema Chishti, *The Indian Express*, September 26, 2017)

The author contextualises the police action in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in the current socio-political setting that characterises Uttar Pradesh. The desire of women to exercise complete and total control over themselves, the author notes, has been concomitant with fatwas, regulations and cries of “gau, bahu” and “beti bachao.” Moreover, right from student elections to libraries, spaces for independent thought have been curbed in UP for long. Aligarh Muslim University has separate libraries, timings for girls and boys and BHU, especially, has pushed for no Wi-Fi, curbed meat-eating and enforced early bedtimes. Given such a context, “girls, bahu-betis of the future, shouting – in a tightly controlled world like BHU – has political and social ramifications that eventually challenges [sic] ideas now ‘official’ in UP: Food, cohabiting, loving or studying.”

Read more: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/those-independent-up-girls-bhu-protest-banaras-hindu-university-girl-students-4861063/>

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