Migration in India: Questions of Social Exclusion

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Abstract

This paper examines the process of migration within India, with special focus on the patterns of migration and the impact of the same on the place of destination and place of origin. The paper uses the theoretical framework derived from the work done by Ravenstein and Lee to understand this process. Data from the Census of India and NSSO, 2007-2008 is used to illustrate the process of migration as it operates in India with reference to the streams of migration and trends in the same. Also examined is the impact of migration on the place of destination with special reference to some of the myths associated with in migration which have been examined in the light of this data. It takes up certain recent incidents which have targeted in migrants across India to illustrate how the myths influence adjustment and practices associated with social exclusion. This paper also focuses on the process of adjustment and the question of social exclusion and some inclusionary practices with reference to the in migrants from some of the States in India which have experimented with some innovative practices.

Keywords: Migration, migration patterns, streams of migration, social inclusion, adjustment, assimilation.

Introduction

2014: Xenophobic attack on expats in Bangalore[1]. Attack on Manipuri youth in Delhi[2]. Thrashing in public of two Manipuri women in New Delhi[3]. NidoTaniam: The murder of a 19 year old student from Arunachal Pradesh in New Delhi[4].

2013: Numerous incidents of discrimination against African nationals across India ranging from harassment to murder[5, 6].

2012: Mass exodus (return) of in migrants from the North Eastern parts of India from Bangalore in August 2012[7]. Targeting of migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha in Mumbai, 2012 and 2008[8]

These incidents reflect an issue that has been thrown up as a result of migration. Migration refers to the movement of human populations over distances. It can be defined as 'any permanent change in residence' which is accompanied a shift in the activities that one is involved in to the new place of residence[9,, 248]. In the Indian context marriage, trade, work related shifts, political agendas and causes stemming from the process of colonization have been some of the reasons that have spurred the process of migration within and from India.

This paper focuses on the process of migration in India and the impact that it has on the population. The paper focuses on some of the issues and myths that arise as a result of this process and some of the methods being conceptualized to address them. This is a significant area of academic research as the issues can be hijacked for vested interests which challenge the integrity of the nation.

A Sociological understanding of Migration

We can distinguish between different forms of migration on the basis of where one migrates to and with respect to the place one migrates from. Distinctions are also made between internal and international migration. Migration across international boundaries is known as emigration (migration out of a country, or leaving ones country to live in another country) and immigration (migration of an individual into a country from another one) while migration within the borders of a nation is known as in migration (Migration into the place of destination within the borders of a country)and out migration (Migration out of the place of origin within the borders of a country).

The process of migration results in the formation of diasporas or diasporic populations. Larissa Remennick in the Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Sociology states that 'The term ''diaspora'' originates from the Greek ''dia'' (over) and ''speiro'' (to sow). The Greeks understood diaspora as migration and colonization of new lands[10]

The word Diaspora has its roots in the concept of dispersal. The term was used initially to refer to the Jewish population in exile from Israel. The origins and widespread use of the word since associate it with a notion of displacement and exile. The 'home' or 'homeland' becomes associated with nostalgia.Sahoo and Maharaj write that 'a migration can be defined as a "diaspora" if there is an emergence of an ethnic consciousness along with an 'associative life' and contacts with the homeland and people of the same origin from across the world [11, 5].

These diasporic populations encounter unique experiences as a result of this process of migration and their interaction with the people who originally belonged to the place of destination. Theories of migration have focussed on how migration has an impact on both the place of origin of the migrants and the place of destination as well as the people in both these places. They have also addressed the factors that have influenced the decision to migrate and the patterns they involve. Some of the areas that have been examined have focussed upon the origins of migration, on the patterns of flow and the direction of migration, on immigrant/ in migrant labour and the adjustments and adaptation of the migrants in their places of destination.

Theories of Migration

E G Ravenstein was one of the first scholars to study migration and its patterns. In a paper written in 1885 on the 'Laws of Migration' he held that the quantum of migration varied inversely with the distance travelled. The Laws, as put forth by Ravenstein,covered the distance travelled and the way in which migration takes place.

Ravenstein held that the majority of the migrants travelled short distances and migrants travelling longer distances, travelled to hubs of commerce and industry in stages. This process produces a stream of migration and a 'compensating counter-current'. Migration is also more common among people living in rural areas as against people from urban spaces. With respect to the distance travelled, women tend to dominate migration over short distances, a fact that is reiterated by data from the Census across India. Ravenstein held that migration rates increase with improvements in transportation and development and one of the driving motives remains the desire that people have to improve their condition in life.

In summary, most migrants travel short distances and migration occurs in a series of stages. Each flow of migration resulted in a counter flow of migration which emerged to compensate for the former. Economic factors were considered to be most significant in the decision to migrate. Ravenstein's seven laws also covered the importance of technology as well as differentials in propensity to migrate on the basis of gender and origin with respect to rural urban areas[12].

Thepush-pull framework evolved from the work done by Everett Lee. Lee famously defined migration as Migration '…as a permanent or semi permanent change of residence.' Lee summarized the factors that influence the decision to migrate in terms of the factors associated with the area of origin, those associated with the area of destination, intervening obstacles and personal factors[13,50]. Push factors operate at the area of origin and the pull factors operate from the area of destination. These factors are also influenced by age, sex, and stage in the life cycle.

Lee held that the volume of migration was related to numerous factors like diversity of territory and people, and intervening obstacles. Migration tends to take place within streams. Some of the streams that have been defined in the Indian context are rural-rural migration, rural-urban migration, urban-urban migration and urban-rural migration. These streams result in counter streams.

With respect to the characteristics of the migrant population, Lee held that migration tends to be selective with respect to factors that operate at both the place of origin and the place of destination. Lee points out that the population that decides to migrate tends to 'lower the quality of population' in the place of destination even as it is better off than the population at the place of origin.

Another dominant theoretical framework in migration studies has been the neoclassical perspective. This approach looks at migration as an outcome of a rational calculation of economic and psychological costs and benefits associated with the decision to migrate. The paradigm of demand and supply becomes applicable. This framework reveals how migrants move towards higher wage regions or regions that offer more opportunities. This reinforces Ravenstein's conceptualization of the operation of push and pull factors on migration.

As Kurekava puts it, 'according to this theory, migration is driven by geographic differences in labor supply and demand and the resulting differentials in wages between labor-rich versus capital-rich countries.[14 3]. Thedecision to migrate is thus influenced by wage differentials and there is a linear relationship between the differentials in wages and the streams of migration. The migration process is also dependent on the costs involved as a result of which geographical and economic differences between regions become significant.

Harris and Todaro developed a model for rural urban migration. The model developed by them is now known as the Harris-Todaro model. This model focuses on how migrant workers base their decision to migrate on their expected incomes[15,16]. This is reflected in international migration as well as one of the compelling factors is considered to be the differential in wages between the countries of origin and destination with the higher wages expected in the country of destination being the factor that influences the decision to move. Todaro looks at return migration as a result of a migration experience that has failed to produce the results that were expected.

Impact of Migration

Migration results in changes in both the place of origin and the place of destination. These changes also take place at two levels, at the individual and the societal levels. The migrant population goes through processes of adaptation, acculturation and assimilation. Adaption involves the process of learning to survive in the place of destination and is a process that all

migrants go through. Some of the migrants would undergo the process of acculturation whereby they would adopt elements of culture of the place of destination. The last process of assimilation involves a more complete adoption of the culture of the place of destination and is not taken up by all the migrants. This assimilation can be complete or segmented. Segmented assimilation reflects the pattern by which the migrant continues to be identified with the ethnic group of origin which would limit complete identification with the host culture at the place of destination.

Other outcomes of the migration process are integration, exclusion and multiculturalism. Integration involves accommodation by both the migrants and the hosts. Exclusion results in ghettoisation of the migrant population while multiculturalism reflects pluralism and can be compared to a salad bowl where each ingredient retains its unique character even as all the components come together to form a harmonious whole. This concept is distinct from the concept of a 'melting pot' in which each component loses its individuality as a new cultural amalgamation results from the interaction.

Migration in India

The Census of India enumerates migration with a focus on migration by birth place and migration by place of last residence. The reasons underlying migration are also enumerated. These reasons are Work/Employment, Business, Education, Marriage, Moved after birth, Moved with household and any other. The Census has collected this data from 1872. Approximately 326 million or 28.5% of India's population constitutes of internal migrants according to the NSSO data from the 2007-08 cycle.

Migration in India is dominated by women who list marriage as the reason behind the move. In fact, NSSO Data states that for 91 per cent of rural female migrants and 61 per cent of the urban female migrants the reason was marriage. Around one third of the migrants are between 15-29 years of age and are considered to be the youth. Employment related causes dominate migration patterns among the men, 29% for rural migrants and 56% for urban migrants. In terms of households, NSSO data reveals that almost 55 per cent of the migrant households in rural areas and 67 per cent of the migrant households in the urban areas had migrated for employment related reasons[17,18].

This migration is both long and short term, the former being marked by relocation and the latter covering seasonal or circular migration. According to both the Census and the NSSO data, marriage is the primary reason behind migration of women and male migration is driven by employment related reasons, with the former dominating in both rural and urban areas.

In India the main states that act as the place of origin are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu.

The main states of destination are Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab and Karnataka. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Kerala are the top three states where out migration exceeds in migration.

A report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India has been compiled as part of the Internal Migration in India Initiative. This report throws light on the state of affairs for the migrants. To quote from the Report:

The constraints faced by migrants are many - lack of formal residency rights; lack of identity proof; lack of political representation; inadequate housing; low-paid, insecure or hazardous work; extreme vulnerability of women and children to trafficking and sex exploitation; exclusion from state-provided services such as health and education and discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, class or gender.

In the absence of proofs of identity and residence, internal migrants are unable to claim social protection entitlements and remain excluded from government sponsored schemes and programmes. Children face disruption of regular schooling, adversely affecting their human capital formation and contributing to the inter-generational transmission of poverty. Further, migrants are negatively portrayed as a "burden" to society, discouraged from settling down and excluded from urban planning initiatives. Most internal migrants are denied basic rights, yet internal migration is given very low priority by the government in policy and practice, partly due to a serious knowledge gap on its extent, nature and magnitude[19].

Alarmingly, studies are revealing that migration to the large cities in India (the million plus cities) has been slowing down. This is being attributed to the suggestion that '…they may have become less welcoming to migrants, revealing patterns of exclusionary urban growth.[19, 6].

This slowdown can also be attributed to enhanced development in the Empowered Action Group (EAG) States, many of which are the states of origin for the migrants. This reinforces Ravenstein and Lee's conceptualization of the migration process which take into account the push factors that work at the place of origin, the pull factors that operate at the place of destination and the intervening obstacles that help the migrant decide on whether to migrate or not.

The Report also points out to some myths which operate around the perceptions of internal migrants in India and elsewhere. These myths can be debunked through an analysis of existing data.

The first myth pointed out by the Report looks at how internal migrants are viewed as a drain on society and a burden for the economies of the destination. This myth can be countered by focussing on how the migrants contribute cheap labour for

manufacturing and services and in doing so contribute to national GDP, but this is not recognised as much of this labour force is part of the unorganized sector. Far from being a drain and burden, migrants are in fact providing a subsidy and are an integral part of the local economy. This became apparent when the cities of Mumbai and Bangalore reeled from the loss of manpower as a result of the mass exodus of migrants in 2008 and 2012 respectively.

The second myth stated in the Report points towards the fear that migrants steal jobs from the local population. This fear works at both the local and the international level and often results in ghettoisation and a rejection of the migrant population by the hosts at the place of destination. The theories of migration point out how migration streams tend to be towards places of potential employment. The migrants move towards areas where the jobs are available. The Report also points out that poorer migrants tend to take up jobs which are termed as 3-D jobs (Dirty, Dangerous and Degrading). These are unattractive jobs which the locals do not want to do.

This fear of people from other states coming in and taking away employment opportunities has been politicized and taken up by different political parties to generate votes. This has often resulted in violence as different ethnic groups have been targeted. Migrants from UP, Bihar and Orissa have found themselves at the receiving end of violence in Mumbai, Maharashtra as the assumption was that they were taking away employment opportunities from Maharashtrians[8]. Data, however, reveals that almost 70% of migrants into Mumbai are from rural and urban parts of Maharashtra itself. Data also reveals that engagement with economic activities increased post migration for both men and women with an increased number of men resorting to self employment.

The Government of Karnataka has also made a move to reserve 70-80% of jobs in the C and D categories for 'locals' through its new industrial policy[20]. This comes against the fear that migrants into the state are taking up most of the work opportunities available which is excluding the locals. This fear is being exacerbated by data that reveals that more than half of Bangalore is populated by non Kannadigas. Migration is also believed to be the factor that is resulting in the stresses being experienced by the city[21].

Other myths are that internal migration can be stopped and that if conditions are unfavourable and if States do not take any initiative to accommodate and protect the in migrants then in migration will slow down. These myths can be debunked by focussing on how history reveals that migration cannot be stopped.

Conclusion

Migration plays a key role in the Indian economy through the contributions made by the migrants in the place of destination as well as the remittances sent by them to the place of origin. In fact, remittances in 2013 were equivalent to 15 percent of exports, and covered 12 percent of imports. Comparisons with key foreign exchange earners are similarly striking. As the World Bank points out remittances to India exceeded earnings from IT services in 2013[22,23]. The quantum of migration is also a factor that need to be taken into account as a record number of people are migrating today[24].

Migration also contributes to the socio cultural fabric of diversity that is an integral characteristic of India. Their social remittances to the place of origin contribute to the dynamic aspect of social change in terms of knowledge, skills, innovations and cultural traits.Migration, thus remains one of the most important demographic processes that has an impact on the socio cultural fabric and economy of our society. This process has resulted in a tremendous exchange and circulation of social and other resources. Within India, however, this process has resulted in some repercussions stemming from myths associated with migration such as those that look at migrants as a drain on the economy and those depicting migrants as people who are going to 'steal' jobs from the locals. These have resulted in socially exclusionary practices which are exacerbated by the absence of identity proof to help establish residency.

Some measures that are being taken up to ensure a more inclusive space for migrants deal with the issue of identification cards which would give access to social security benefits even in the absence of proof of residence in the place of destination. The *Aadhar*card holds out the promise of an identity card which would be valid across the nation. Other measures cover skill building programs for migrant workers to build their capabilities. These programs are being undertaken by various NGOs across the nation like the Disha Foundation in Nashik. Legal aid is being offered through legal clinics run as extension programs to ensure that migrant workers know about their rights and can avail of benefits due to them.

These measures will go a long way in ensuring a more inclusive space for the migrants. In addition, the myths associated with migration need to be addressed at a much wider level to prevent hijacking of migrant issues by vested political interests and the xenophobic ill treatment of migrants as a result of these fears.

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