

Problems of Labour Migration in Bihar

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Abstract- Bihar has a long history of labour migration, and its pace has quickened over the past few decades. A lack of non-farm employment opportunities in rural Bihar, coupled with increasing demand for labour in other parts of the country has substantially increased the rate of labour migration from the state. However, a large number of migrant workers from Bihar are engaged in short term, casual and precarious employment at the destinations. They live and work in unsafe and unhygienic conditions. In the villages, households of migrant workers suffer from low and irregular remittances, semi-feudal systems, lack of access to social protection and basic services, as well as political exclusion. Three-quarters of rural Bihar is employed in the agricultural sector as marginal farmers or agricultural labourers, with very low returns. It has been argued that 'semi-feudal' systems of production continue in these regions, where power and land is concentrated in the hands of the upper castes. Caste, class and land ownership remain determinants of social, economic and political power. Migrant households, in particular, remain politically excluded, as they are away making a livelihood, rendering them unable to seek reform or entitlements. In this scenario, it is essential for all stakeholders, including the source and destination governments, as well as workers' organisations, to understand and collectively respond to the issues and challenges of labour migration in Bihar.

Keywords- Bihar, Labour, Migration, Employment and Government.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bihar is second on the list of states which contributes 15 per cent migrant labourers especially to the Gulf countries, according to latest figures of the e General of Emigrants (PGoE). Uttar Pradesh tops the list. During the contribution of Uttar Pradesh was 30 per cent. Floods has caused unprecedented loss to lives, livelihoods, infrastructure and property in north-eastern Bihar. Kosi is called the sorrow of Bihar, but Kamla, too, is responsible for frequent flooding.

Work remains the main reason for out migration from Bihar. There are an estimated 4.4 to 5 million labour migrants from Bihar working in the other parts of the country (IIPA, 2010). The third most populous state in India, 55.3 percent of rural Bihar lives below the poverty line. The state witnessed rapid economic growth in the last decade, however, this growth was confined to the secondary and tertiary sectors, thereby surpassing the disproportionate majority, who reside in rural areas and are dependent on the agricultural sector, as small and marginal farmers. Out migration has assumed greater significance due to the (de)-agrarianising and highly mobile' nature of rural Bihar, where a lack of employment opportunities is combined with a rising demand for labour in other parts of the country. The proportion of migrant workers to total workers rose from 16 percent in 1998-99 to

25 percent in 2009-10. In other words, 1 out of 4 workers are labour migrants.[1]

According to protector general, M C Luther if there is a drought, there is no job in agriculture or industry and people want to run to a place where they can earn their livelihood and support their family. So, drought and migration are correlated. The International Growth Centre in its 2016 report on labour migration from had said the labourers are less interested in agriculture. They Are more interested in getting employment in building construction, carpentry or masonry work and other types of casual work in the informal sector.[2] It is usually argued that migration symbolises upward mobility an inherent growth and development. It is hard to deny this general concept.

But at the same time it cannot be denied that the instance of increased migration of labourers either from Bihar or any state is a negative point as this could well be described as distress migration. The nature and character of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) had at the time of launch sent indication that it would not succeed in a country like India. True enough it failed the hopes of these villagers.

Rural to rural migration comprise over 79 percent of the total migrants of the state Only about 12 percent of Bihar's

migrants fall in the category of rural to urban migrants. the trend of labour migration has shifted to urban destinations. The most popular destination for labour migrants from the state, accounting for 28 percent migrant workers. Another important destination is Punjab, where 20 percent of migrants from Bihar are engaged in both rural and urban areas in districts such as Jalandhar and Ludhiana. 9 percent of Bihari migrants are found in Maharashtra, particularly in Mumbai, Bhiwandi, Pune. Other important destinations are Haryana, Gujarat and West Bengal, the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are also destinations.[3]

Migrant workers from Bihar regions are largely engaged in the construction sector, which accounts for 22 percent of this group. A significant 20 percent are also engaged in industry. However, agricultural sector continues to engage 16 percent of all migrant workers, who largely come from the poorer districts of northern Bihar such as Purnia and Araria. Work sectors are highly variant depending upon the source district, as well as the socio-economic status of the migrant worker.[4]

The more vulnerable rural to rural migrants, who work in agricultural labour at the destination, largely come from the most impoverished districts of Purnia and Araria, as compared to migrants from better off districts such as Nalanda and Rohtas, who have a better representation in education and professional services.

Most of the labourer even did not get Labour Card. The hundred days of employment remained a dream for many. This was simply a dole and nothing more. Since the labourers do not get in real sense the work for more than 50 days a year, they have left with no alternative but to migrate to other better-off states in search of work and money.

Most of the labourers migrated out of Bihar due to threat to their lives and aggravating agrarian crisis. A look at the violent clashes taking in rural Bihar for minimum wages or for the share would make it explicit that the labourers and rural poor are scared to face the landed gentry who still personal lives. The Nitish government has been showcasing the implementing of MGNREGA as major achievement of his government. Undeniably during the early years of his rule, he used the vast force of free labour to improve his public image and was idolised as a good administrator, it also strengthened the infrastructure, especially road.

While this improved his public image and was idolised as a good administrator, it also temporarily put a check on migration. This created an impression in the mind of the people that this government was really working for development and Bihar was growing. But the basic human indices provide some intriguing facts. MGNREGA has

helped decrease migration, but to a very small extent. Members per family have returned to their villages to work under MGNREGA research conducted in 2009-10. 4.42 million people from Bihar migrate every year to various states of India and that migration has actually gone up.[5]

This nature of migration is perilously affecting the social and cultural understanding, relations and traditional norms. This is giving birth to a hybrid cultural population. In his desperation to seek livelihood, the individual stands completely isolated. It is also argued that sons and daughters of the landed people are also migrating. Yes it is true.

Agricultural labourers who are primarily from scheduled castes and Dalits have taken to substantive migration. They have lost their hopes of survival of the economy and coming out of the subsistence survival. The migrants could more appropriately be called as distressed migrants. They migrate not for better economic opportunity with higher wages at the place of destination, rather they migrate because in their own village there is no employment at all, at whatsoever wage rate.

The rural masses leave their villages under distressed conditions and, often, do possess money even to meet travel expenses. For this reason they do money on which they pay exorbitant interest rate. The pattern of expenditure the rural poor migrants suggests that they are caught into a vicious cycle deprivation. Bihar is considered as the pocket of chronic poverty.[6]

The largest proportion of migrants comes from the upper caste, landed Hindu and Muslim communities. However, migration is also popular among lower class Muslims, and Other Backward Classes (OBC). In fact, the greatest rate of increase in migration, over 20 percent between 1999 and 2011 was observed among the Scheduled Castes (SC), as well as landless and agricultural labouring communities. These also constitute the groups who migrate for a short term to work in casual and irregular employment at the destination.[7] This signals towards the fact that vulnerable communities from Bihar are increasingly relying on migration to undertake precarious work as a strategy to cope with the falling productivity of agriculture and lack of employment opportunities in rural regions of the state. The paper observes that uneven development has been the predominant driving force behind labour migration. Besides, disparities in socio-economic conditions, wage differentials and disparities in the development policies also induce individuals to migrate. Moreover, two factors, identified as 'push' and 'pull' factors, operate either simultaneously or in isolation to generate migration flow. If an individual migrate to attain improved standard of living by getting high wage/salary then it is called migration due to 'pull' factor. On the other hand, individuals often migrate to repay the old debt at source area, which is called 'push' factor. Finally, the

paper discusses the probable impact of labour migration on the migrant, his/her family members and on the source and destination areas. The Objectives of the Study is based on following headings, To study the causes of labour migration in Bihar and problems faced by the migrant labour. To offer valuable suggestions for the improvement of migrant labour social welfare.

II. RELATED WORK

There are a considerable number of studies regarding the migration aspect of the Indian population. We will briefly survey some of the major works as it is difficult to survey all the works done because of the vastness of the literature.

Mitra & Murayama (2008) analyzed the district level rural to urban migration rates among males and females separately and find that both the rates are closely associated (irrespective of whether the migrants originate from the rural areas within the state or outside the state). Though many of the relatively poor and backward states actually show large population mobility, which is primarily in search of a livelihood, the mobility of male population is also seen to be prominent in the relatively advanced states like Maharashtra and Gujarat.

World Development Report (2009) Deals with factor mobility and migration, and describes that the majority of labour movement is not rural-urban migration, but from economically lagging rural areas to leading rural areas like Punjab, Gujarat and Maharashtra to work on the farm. However there has also been a steady flow of longer term migration into the cities and they are pulled in by economic growth or agglomeration economies and increasing returns to scale obtainable by the clustering of skills and talent.

Dwivedi (2012) Migration in India is mostly influenced by social structures and pattern of development. The development policies by all the governments since Independence have accelerated the process of migration. Uneven development is the main cause of migration. Added to it, are the disparities, Inter regional and amongst different socio-economic classes. There are two important reasons for rural labour migration: (1) migration for survival, and (2) migration for subsistence. The first one indicates the severe social and economic hardships faced by rural labourers, a situation where migration becomes necessary to stay alive. These communities are generally landless, illiterate and drawn largely from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other depressed castes. The second reason for migration is also rooted in subsistence and arises because of the need to supplement income in order to fill the gaps of seasonal employment. Such communities often migrate for shorter periods and do not ordinarily travel very far from their homes.

Kundu & Ray, Saraswati (2012) has analysed the migration and urbanization patterns in recent decades. It suggests distinctly declining trend. It can be argued that migration process has inbuilt screening system picking up people from higher economic and social status. Decline in share of migration in search of employment and increasing business and study related mobility further confirm this. In contrast, poverty induced migration become less important over time. To attract private capital, urban centers are less accommodating top poor, restricting entry and increasing rural-urban inequality. Strategy of specially unbalanced growth through dispersion of concentration advocated by World Bank and others needs to be examined with empirical rigour.

III. METHODOLOGY

The method used in this paper is descriptive-evaluative method. The secondary data has been used to recognize the nature of migration as well as the socio-economic status of the migrants. The study is mainly review based. It is purely supported by secondary source of data, i.e. books, journals, papers and articles and internet.

IV. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY MIGRANT LABOUR

Labour migration is increasingly viewed as a positive phenomenon to allow impoverished, rural households to exit poverty and escape oppressive caste hierarchies in the villages. However, migrant communities face a number of challenges at source in rural Bihar, and at destination, which decrease potential poverty alleviation effects.

Rural Bihar is fraught with challenges, including widespread poverty and economic stagnation due to low agricultural productivity, coupled with lack of investments in industrial development. Economic growth has been concentrated in the tertiary sector and largely confined to Patna, the state capital.

Three-quarters of rural Bihar is employed in the agricultural sector as marginal farmers or agricultural labourers, with very low returns. It has been argued that 'semi-feudal' systems of production continue in these regions, where power and land is concentrated in the hands of the upper castes. Caste, class and land ownership remain determinants of social, economic and political power. Migrant households, in particular, remain politically excluded, as they are away making a livelihood, rendering them unable to seek reform or entitlements.

Rural Bihar is poorly governed, with the vast majority of households having low access to basic social protection such as PDS, MGNREGA or various government pension schemes. A lack of investment in basic services and

infrastructure has also affected rural households, who face barriers in accessing education or primary healthcare.

Migration largely takes place between the ages of 15-40. After the age of 40, returnee migrants struggle with the lack of livelihood opportunities. Hard physical labour, unsafe worksites and bad living conditions have detrimental impacts on the migrant labourers' health. They often return with disabilities or crippling diseases, often causing the household to slip back into poverty. This also leads to a cycle of migration, where young children, around 14 to 15 years of age, migrate in order to supplement the family's income.[8]

Prevailing systems of patriarchy make it exceptionally difficult for women to manage their households in the absence of men. Due to the high reliance on remittances, which are irregular and unreliable, women struggle to manage household finances. Women, particularly those from lower castes, face considerable barriers in accessing credit, frequently borrowing from moneylenders at high rates of interest. This becomes especially problematic when the family members are faced with sudden health issues or other emergencies.

The average amount of remittances is as low as Rs. 15,000 per annum, more than two-thirds of which are spent on food and subsistence consumption, as well as on servicing debts. Migration in these cases is more likely to just marginally pull the family out of absolute poverty and some degree of relief from total starvation. Labour migrants face a large number of challenges at destination, both in navigating their lives in a distant and unknown region, as well as at their workplaces, which are largely in the informal and unorganised sector.

Policy Framework :

The framework provided here is based upon proven, high impact interventions that can be adapted to the context of Bihar. Access to universal social protection is the need of migrants, as well as other households in the impoverished, high migration regions. Enhancing and strengthening public delivery systems for basic entitlements such as PDS, MGNREGA and social security schemes can have a significant impact on the wellbeing of rural households. Furthermore, access to affordable and quality healthcare can help many households avoid financial shocks posed by health emergencies. Access to child care facilities, such as Anganwadis, will reduce the burden of work on women and young girls.[9] It is necessary to ensure that the capacities of public delivery systems are enhanced to be inclusive of migrant households, where women face restrictions on their mobility, and in interacting with the public sphere. This can be achieved by sensitising the local administration officials to specifically target and reach out to both remote and high migration communities. Enabling portability of these

entitlements is also important in the context of seasonal migrant households, where members are highly mobile between source and destination regions.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

The above discussion has revealed that the labour migration is the common phenomenon in Bihar. The process of migration in this state generally influenced by structures of societies and the nature of development. The developmental policies issued by the governments since the time of sovereignty have accelerated the migration process. Actually uneven development is the foremost grounds of Migration. The main cause of the migration is needing to enhancement the income in prefer to fill the space of seasonal employment. In addition, agriculture is a seasonal occupation, which cannot open the job opportunities around the year to all. As it has been discussed frequently that major migration is due to failure of Agriculture as mainstream livelihood activity; policy makers should explore ways and means to reestablish the importance of Agriculture in terms of livelihood. However, the important fact about the migration is that it never can be totally stopped as it is under the process of development. Faulty implementation of several welfare legislations and schemes has led towards more and more migration of rural poor. To the extent, it seems necessary for marginalized and vulnerable class of the society to migrate and have some respectable livelihood options. The study is based on limited area so future study should be taken in broad area and scope.

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