

Jayesh M.P. (Entry No: 2012HUZ8473)
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

**INTER-STATE MIGRATION FOR EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA:
A STUDY ON CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN KERALA**

Abstract

This thesis attempts to describe and analyse the features of and the factors behind long-distance internal migration of workers in India, in particular the migration between Indian States. The core of this thesis is based on data collected from an extensive field survey of migrant workers in the construction sector in Kozhikode district of Kerala. The analysis in this thesis has also relied on secondary data sources on population, labour market, and migration in India.

A study on internal migration of workers is important for three reasons in the current Indian context. First, evidence from various sources suggest that there has been a large increase in migration of workers, mostly less-skilled workers, in India. The general direction of this migration is from the populous States in the eastern and northern region of India to destinations, mainly, in the southern and western States. Second, some of the existing studies indicate that migration in India is typically undertaken by workers belonging to the more privileged groups. However, there are also studies providing evidence for a large scale movement of under-privileged workers, from rural to urban and semi-urban areas, on a temporary or circular basis. Third, despite the growing importance of internal migration in India's labour market, studies in this area suffer from the absence of reliable official data sources.

Given the context described above, I addressed three key questions in my thesis. They are, first, the question of who migrate for work. That is, the thesis tried to understand the social and economic background of the migrant workers who were engaged in the construction sector in Kozhikode district. Second, the thesis attempted to understand how workers shifted across sectors and regions over time, in the process of searching for their livelihoods. The thesis described the process of migration by analyzing the employment histories of the migrant

workers. Third, the thesis examined the impacts of migration on living and working conditions of workers after migration.

The thesis begins with an analysis of demographic structures and key features of labour markets across Indian States, with special reference to migration (Chapter 2). We found that the working-age population (15-59) in India is increasing but its distribution is not homogenous across Indian States. Compared to the southern and western States, population in the northern and eastern States is younger. The Census data shows a large decline in the size of main cultivators and an increase in the size of marginal labourers in India during the two decades after 1991. These changes were more marked in the eastern, northern and central-eastern States than in the western and southern States of the country. The analysis of migration tables of the Census shows that there has been a significant increase in internal migration in India, from the 2000s onwards. Migration of men was mainly on account of employment reasons, whereas female migration was mainly due to marriage.

The thesis then discusses the specific context of Kerala's economy and labour market, which created demand for inward migration of workers from other Indian States (Chapter 3). The thesis (Chapter 4) also discusses the rationale for choosing the construction sector in Kozhikode district for the study of migrant workers in Kerala. Then the chapter explains the methodology of field research and how the sample of migrant workers was chosen in Kozhikode (Chapter 4).

The thesis then examines the various factors that may have 'pushed' migrant workers to take the decision to migrate. In this chapter, we analyse the landholdings, caste, and education profiles of migrant construction workers in Kozhikode district. Further, this chapter describes the gender, age, marital status, size of family and birth position, mother tongue and other language skills of the migrant workers in the district. Our study provides evidence that significant number of workers in the sample were coming from households which were categorised as below poverty line (BPL). The thesis next explores the features of migrants' household back in villages, including the assistance received from the State and conditions of cultivation in their villages (Chapter 5).

The thesis then tried to understand the process of migration using an analysis of employment histories of the sample workers (Chapter 6). It throws light on the influence of land ownership and caste on the migration process. It describes the process of employment shifts of

workers across sectors -- from agriculture and other traditional sectors to the non-agricultural sectors -- to understand the nature of migration of workers from villages to urban and semi-urban areas within and outside their States of origin. The thesis also examines the agencies at various stages that aided workers in the process of migration (particularly the agencies that provided information about and financed the cost of migration). It described the workers' movements across regions and their year of entry into Kerala. Further, it explained the specific features of circular and seasonal nature of migration, and examined the context of migration from employers' perspective (Chapter 6).

The thesis then proceeds with an analysis of the pull factors that may have aided the process of migration of workers to Kerala (Chapter 7). This chapter examined the nature of work, wages and non-wage benefits received by the sample workers in the district, hours of work, frequency and mode of wage payments, and the places and sectors in which the workers had been engaged in the preceding years. It estimated the number of days of employment available for the sample workers in Kozhikode and their native villages in the year preceding the survey, and also estimated workers' earnings and expenditures and remittances made by the workers in the month preceding the survey. It describes the living and working conditions of the workers in Kozhikode, including issues of occupational safety and health of the workers (Chapter 7).

The thesis concludes that both push and pull factors have been found to be important in the current migration of workers from the eastern and northern parts of the country to Kerala. Migrant workers in the sample from West Bengal suffered from both social and economic disadvantages. At the same time, we also find that migrant workers from West Bengal have increasingly been drawn from more regions within the State and from broader segments of that State's society. Migration remains short-term in nature and migrant workers continue to maintain strong connections with their villages. The thesis provides a nuanced understanding of the process of inter-State migration for employment in India.