

# Unmasking the Dichotomy of Temporary and Permanent Labour Migrations in India

Kunal Keshri<sup>1</sup> and R. B. Bhagat<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction and Conceptualization

Historically India has witnessed large scale labour mobility. Notwithstanding, this aspect of migration has rarely been systematically studied (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). Nature of this complex phenomenon differs on the basis of duration, origin and destination. Temporary and permanent migrations are two significant forms of internal labour mobility which are dichotomized on the basis of duration and usual place of residence. Both of these are competing form of migrations and each one has diverse characteristics from other. Temporary labour migration is a move made for a short period of time (say few months in a year) with the intention of returning to the place of usual residence. It is a sort of mobility where the economic activity of a person is moved but not the usual residence (Bilsborrow et al., 1984). Conversely, in permanent labour migration usual residence of the person is changed and his/her chances to return home are very less.

With the increasing shift of labour force from agriculture to industry and the tertiary sector, temporary migration has gained significance in India (Keshri and Bhagat, 2010). While researchers and policy makers have increasingly recognized the importance of temporary migration, little attempt has been made to understand the dichotomy of temporary and permanent forms of labour migration. Nonetheless, data to do so are often non-existent owing to the difficulty in identifying and surveying temporary migrants, most of whom are not identified separately, from permanent migrants in censuses and surveys (Djamba et al., 1999; Keshri and Bhagat, 2010). The situation is slowly changing as national and international agencies begin to fund projects focussing on changing labour market and labour mobility. Indian National Sample Survey, which is responsible for collecting socio-economic data in the country, has recently collected detailed information related to temporary migration along with permanent migration on its 64<sup>th</sup> round (2007-2008). Using this data, in present study, we have focussed on the extent to which the pattern and characteristics of temporary and permanent migrants differ. We have also endeavoured to examine whether social and economic factors have the similar effect on both forms of labour mobility or is it vice-versa?

## Data and Methods

The present study utilized the Unit Level Data of the 64<sup>th</sup> round (2007-08) of National Sample Survey (NSS) of India, which is a nationally representative, large-scale, multi round survey. In this round information on various facets of migration was collected through “Employment & Unemployment and Migration Particulars” Schedule (Schedule 10.2). In the central sample, survey covered a sample of 125,578 households (79,091 in rural areas and

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Student, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai

<sup>2</sup> Prof. and Head, Department of Migration and Urban Studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai

46,487 in urban areas) and a sample of 572,254 persons (3,74,294 in rural areas and 1,97,960 in urban areas) (NSSO, 2010).

A household member who had stayed away from the village/town, during the last 365 days, for employment or in search of employment for a period of 30 days to six months was considered as a *temporary labour migrant*. On the other hand a household member whose last usual place of residence<sup>3</sup> (UPR), anytime in the past, was different from the present place of enumeration was considered as a permanent migrant and if the person has stated any one of the employment related reasons<sup>4</sup> as his reason for migration then he/she was considered as *permanent labour migrant*. We have included only the persons of working age-group (15-64 years) in the analysis considering them as part of labour force.

To explore the pattern of permanent migration we have used the information regarding last usual place of residence: same district (rural or urban), same state but another district (rural or urban), another state (rural or urban) and identified four streams of permanent migration: rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to rural and urban to urban. Similar information is also available for the temporary labour migrants, which is based on the destination for longest spell (a period of staying away from the village/town for a period of 15 or more was termed as a spell) of migration. Aforementioned streams of migration were also computed for temporary labour migration using it.

We have estimated the migration rates (migrants per thousand) according to important socioeconomic variables. Several demographic and socio-economic factors such as age, sex, educational attainment, social group/caste, religion and poverty affect the temporary migration and permanent migration (Bhagat, 2010; Deshingkar and Grimm, 2005). All these are considered in the multivariate analysis. We have applied different sets of logistic regression models for examining the determinants of temporary migration (1=if person is temporary labour migrant, 0=otherwise) and permanent migration (1=if person is permanent labour migrant, 0=otherwise) separately for rural and urban areas.

### **Preliminary Findings**

Preliminary results show stark differentials in temporary and permanent labour migration with respect to various background variables. In rural areas temporary migration rate is significantly higher than permanent migration. On the other hand in urban areas permanent migration rate is several times higher than temporary migration. We observe minuscule gender differentials as far as temporary migration rate is concerned. But disparities are quite large for permanent migration and male migration rate is substantially higher than their female counterparts. Results on streams of migration suggest that among temporary migrants greatest proportion falls in rural to urban stream (63 %) followed by the rural to rural stream (30 %) whereas among permanent labour migrants greatest proportion fall in rural to urban stream (50 %) followed by urban to urban stream (25 %) (table 1). Furthermore, in rural areas

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<sup>3</sup> Where, usual place of residence was defined in the NSS as a place (village/town) where the persons had stayed continuously for a period of six months or more).

<sup>4</sup> Employment related reasons: In search of employment, in search of better employment, business, to take up employment/better employment, transfer of service/contract, proximity of work.

mean age is lower among temporary migrants than permanent migrants. Differentials in urban areas are not significant.

To measure economic factors affecting migration we have taken the proxy of monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE) and for social factors educational attainment along with caste groups. Both bi-variate and multivariate results (table 2 and table 3) suggest that with increasing MPCE quintiles, the temporary migration decreases while permanent migration increases. Further, results show that socioeconomically backward groups like scheduled tribes and scheduled castes are more likely to migrate temporarily than higher caste groups. Contrastingly higher caste groups are more likely to be permanent migrants. Results further suggest that educational level is negatively associated with temporary migration, whereas relationship is found unclear in respect to permanent migration. It could be inferred from the available results that socio-economically backward and poorest of the poor are more likely migrate temporarily while better-off groups are have more chances to go for permanent migration.

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**Table 1: Percent Distribution of Temporary Migrants by Streams of Migration, (age-group, 15-64 years), India, National Sample Survey, 2007-2008**

Streams of Migration	Male		Female		Total	
	Temporary	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent
Rural to rural	28.5	17.4	30.5	20.2	29.4	18.5
Rural to urban	63.7	52.4	62.6	46.9	63.2	50.3
Urban to rural	2.4	5.5	1.8	6.3	2.1	5.8
Urban to urban	5.4	24.7	5.2	26.7	5.3	25.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Table 2: Temporary and Permanent Migration Rate (migrants per thousand) according to background characteristics by Place of Residence, (age-group, 15-64 years), India, National Sample Survey, 2007-2008**

Variables	Rural		Urban	
	Temporary	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent
<i>Sex*</i>				
Male	27.5	16.1	6.1	133.6
Female	25.2	12.6	4.8	88.3
<i>MPCE Quintiles*</i>				
Lowest	46.9	6.3	9.2	47.2
Lower	33.3	8.6	7.0	72.1
Medium	27.2	8.3	4.3	104.3
Higher	18.7	11.5	5.0	141.6
Highest	12.1	33.1	3.2	173.0
<i>Educational status*</i>				
Below primary	33.0	11.6	7.1	107.6
Primary or middle complete	20.8	14.0	6.2	114.5
Higher secondary complete	12.7	23.2	3.8	106.3
Graduate or above	10.4	43.6	3.2	131.7
<i>Social Group*</i>				
Scheduled tribes	49.0	11.7	6.5	137.9
Scheduled castes	29.9	13.5	6.7	105.7
Other backward classes	23.9	13.4	6.5	98.6
Others	18.0	18.1	4.3	123.8
Age (Mean)	25.2	29.6	29.9	28.4
Total	<b>26.4</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>112.2</b>

Note: \* Significant at  $p < 0.001$  (Chi square)

**Table 3: Results of logistic regression analysis using various models for the determinants of temporary and permanent migrations (age-group, 15-64 years), India, National Sample Survey, 1999-2000**

Covariates	Rural		Urban	
	Temporary Migrants	Permanent Migrants	Temporary Migrants	Permanent Migrants
	N=235707	N=235707	N=135255	N=135255
<i>MPCE Quintiles<sup>®</sup></i>				
Lowest	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Lower	0.81***	1.25***	0.65***	1.33***
Medium	0.65***	1.28***	0.52***	1.70***
Higher	0.52***	1.59***	0.46***	2.52***
Highest	0.42***	3.48***	0.32***	3.14***
<i>Educational Attainment</i>				
Below primary <sup>®</sup>	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Primary or middle	0.82***	0.98	0.80***	0.90***
Secondary or higher	0.70***	1.19***	0.91*	0.66***
<i>Social Group</i>				
Scheduled Tribes <sup>®</sup>	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Scheduled Castes	0.98	1.00	0.74***	1.03
Other Backward Classes	0.82***	1.13***	0.61***	0.97
Others	0.64***	1.31***	0.47***	0.99

Notes: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , <sup>®</sup>=Reference category, (Age, sex, marital status, size of land holding, and size of the household are controlled)