

Rightless Migration in India: A Study of Inefficiency and Sufferings Sprouting in the Agricultural Fields of Bihar

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Abstract

The state of Bihar, an agrarian economy, is currently representing a paradoxical situation in India as the development narrative of north and south Bihar displays a unique history of economic advancement. During the Covid-19 pandemic, spurt in migration and even reverse migration created a severe livelihood crisis for the unemployed people in Bihar. United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals of economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability can be successful in improving the lives of labourers if the socio-economic protection and workers' rights are given due importance. The present study aims at explicating the reasons for unemployment, migration and poor economic conditions of labour in Bihar, a state in eastern part of India. Secondary data available from NSSO, Census of India and Economic survey of Bihar have been analysed for this research. The study is based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis and descriptive methods to understand the various socio-economic facets of migration. Absence of uniform labour standards in the unorganised sector related to migrant labourers is the major issue which needs to be immediately and adequately addressed by the Government of India and the state government of Bihar.

Keywords: *Agriculture, Dependency Ratio, Labour Migration, North Bihar, Unemployment*

Introduction

The state of Bihar, an agrarian economy, is currently representing a paradoxical situation in India. Compared to India's growth rate of 8.2 per cent in 2016 which came down to the extent of -5.8 per cent in the year 2020, Bihar maintained a relatively high growth rate of 13.41 per cent between 2016 to 2019 (World Bank 2024). During Covid-19 pandemic, the economy of Bihar experienced the slowdown but it recovered to its pre Covid-19 status in the year 2021-22 with almost 11% growth rate (Singh 2023). However, this growth rate in Bihar was accompanied with a low urbanisation rate of 11.29 per cent as compared to the national average of 31.16 per cent and with the lowest industrialisation rate. The contribution of the industrial sector in Gross State Value Added (GSVA) to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of the state of Bihar is just 20 per cent, which is much lower than the national average of 31.2 per cent (Bihar Economic Survey 2019-20). With existing lopsided development between south and north Bihar, the state's capital-centric development model has further created major imbalance and the state is actually unable to deal with the situation. Over the years, the nature and sustainability of growth has undergone major change. Particularly, during the recent Covid-19 pandemic, spurt in migration and even reverse migration created a severe livelihood crisis for the unemployed people in Bihar. The most important reason for long and short term (circular) migration which has become common in the case of Bihar, is the inadequate numbers of employment compounded by the poor quality of jobs. Even with the 80 million youths (Highlights 2024) the state is unable to enjoy the population dividend. Sustainable development can be successful in improving the lives of ordinary people if socio-economic protection and workers' rights are given due importance. It is the only possible way to promote the three components of sustainable development i.e., economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability (Yinuo 2023). The Directive Principles of State Policy under the Indian Constitution has laid down important principles of governance through Arts 39, 41 and 42, for a welfare state. The Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 was the earliest legal framework providing protection to the migrant labourers, later subsumed in 2019 under "The Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, 2020" (OSH Code) (Namrata 2021). The code consolidates 29 central labour laws and modifies

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13 laws pertaining to occupational safety and contract labour. The Code aims at generating employment and facilitating ease of doing business and capital growth. However, it is important to mention here that COVID-19 and the pandemic severely affected labour markets and increased inequality and poverty in most of the countries. In the context of India, the existing inequalities and vulnerabilities increased manifold. On the issue of domestic migrant workers, UN Special Rapporteurs alerted India that the sudden lockdown and COVID-19 containment measures would increase the hardship and sufferings of about 100 million labourers (United Nations 2024).

On the matter related to problems and miseries of migrant labourers faced during the recent pandemic and related lockdown, the Supreme court of India in *Bandhua Mukti Morcha vs. Union of India & ors*, Writ Petition (C) No. 916 of 2020, accepted that migrant labourers were one of the worst affected groups during nationwide lockdown (Writ Petition (C) No. 916 of 2020). The Supreme Court observed that there were mainly two reasons resulting in this situation, first cessation of employment and second, the fear of the pandemic (Writ Petition (C) No. 916 of 2020). In the absence of free transport back to their homes, many of the migrants had to borrow money, which put them back into financial precarity (Singhal, Sarin and Rajendra 2024). This situation resulted in mass exodus of migrant workers, who out of distress started walking on highways on foot or using their own modes of transport day and night in the absence of food and shelter. It was in this regard the Supreme Court of India had issued the notice to few states/Union Territories and Union of India to take immediate measures and steps. In accordance with the order of the Supreme Court dated 26/05/2020 affidavits of the states and central government were filed. Some people and media houses also brought into the notice of the Apex Court important facts, figures and measures related to migrant labourers and the pressing need to reduce their miseries.

Pursuant to that order, the State of Bihar also submitted its affidavit which included details regarding migrant labourers and the measures taken by the state government to cope up with the situation. In its affidavit before the Supreme Court of India, in Writ Petition (C) No. 916 of 2020, the State of Bihar submitted that approximately 28 lakh migrants returned during that period using railway and road transport. As per this affidavit filed by the State of Bihar, about 19 lakh migrant labourers were registered under a skill mapping programme using a portal app at the time of their arrival at different blocks and Block quarantine camps. Roughly, 11 lakh such labourers were listed under ‘Sharmik Panjikaran Portal’ of the Labour Resource Department and approximately 2 lakh unorganised workers were registered under Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandan Yojna.⁷

At this juncture, it is pertinent to understand that the state governments owe the duty to fulfil the constitutional objective of fostering socio-economic justice, equality of status and equality of opportunity for all the citizens of India. Furthermore, it should be considered as essential for ensuring the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental right of every person to live with human dignity. Therefore, it is a constitutional obligation of the state, to ensure that the socio-economic welfare of the poor section including migrants are not adversely affected and compromised.

If we look at the economic profile of the state of Bihar, it is infamous for a significantly high level of migration, which is unfortunately underestimated and understudied by the policymakers as well as data collection offices in India like National Sample Survey Office and Census of India. The recent issue of reverse migration, exodus of migrant workers from the state of Bihar is the result of a deep-rooted structural crisis and not the product of recent pandemic. Various evacuation measures including ‘Vande Bharath Mission’ in India exposed the country’s administrative and economic challenges in dealing with the issues of migrants (Liao 2020). In addition to practical difficulties related to their mobility, such migrants upon return to their home state were also unable to access necessary services (OECD 2020). Reasons for migration vary, however it is mainly caused by low productivity and falling income and employment in agriculture (Vijayabaskar et al, 2018). When agriculture becomes economically unviable, it fails to persuade rural labourers to work (Nandkarni 2018). The low productivity of agriculture combined with frequent flood and drought over the years has made agriculture a less preferred choice of employment by rural population in Bihar (Kumar 2020). The crisis further deepens with insufficient employment opportunities in the non-agricultural sector. Perhaps the overwhelming proportion of migration from Bihar is because of labourers losing interest in agriculture and related activities (Roy 2016). Absence of adequate employment

opportunities results in compulsion and involuntary migration. It is only recently that the issue of migration and reverse migration resurfaced and has drawn national as well as international attention because of the pandemic, imposition of lockdown, related recession resulting in a huge humanitarian crisis. The adverse impact of recession is felt more by the low-income migrant workers having no alternative and insignificant social security (Khanna 2020). There is a strong relationship between economic prosperity of urban and prosperous places on one hand and precarity of migrant workforce in those places on other hand (Dutta 2020). The precarious conditions of the migrant labourers are mainly due to poorer working conditions and relatively lower income earnings. The vulnerability of the migrant workers increases manyfold if they belong to economically weak state like Bihar (Vijay 2005). Such migrants are mostly employed in worse patterns of employment with no social means to prevent any kind of deprivation, discrimination or even exclusion. In fact, the pandemic exposed them to infections, socio-economic insecurity and even worst form of deprivation and discrimination. The Covid-19 disruptions in labour migration has exposed the reality that how an unpredictable event can explain the “underlying structural conditions which both produce crisis and mask such conditions” (Bylander 2018).

Many foregoing reliable studies provide converging evidence that the problem of labour migration is a big challenge in the state of Bihar and it is not the outcome of current crisis. The causes of migration, its impact and pattern are crucial indicators of general employment conditions, income earnings and the conditions of living of a region. The present study focuses on the causes, trend and magnitude of migration and how it is undermining the objective of economic welfare of the northern region of the state of Bihar. The authors have used macroeconomic migration determinants to examine the various aspects of migration in the state of Bihar like dependency ratio, unemployment rate, position of agriculture, main labourers and migrant labourers available from different secondary sources. These macroeconomic variables hold great significance when we have to examine different facets of migration. On the basis of economic theories, *ceteris paribus*, unemployed persons are more likely to migrate than the employed because of lower opportunity costs of moving (DaVanzo 1978). The unemployment rate and outmigration share a positive correlation. High migration rate increases dependency ratio in the source as well as destination place. In fact, high dependency ratio may have a detrimental effect on labour participation of individuals. With the increase in inter-generational dependency in the household, the burden of unpaid labour falls disproportionately on the women (Naumann 2021). Many studies have confirmed the potential impact of labour migration on the agriculture sector. Studies in developed countries have confirmed that in short run migration has a negative impact on agriculture if the unavailability of agriculture labours is capable of driving up wage rate for non-migrant labours in the rural areas which may temporarily benefit them but can cause overall fall in the total output in agriculture (Stamoulis 2001). But if the agriculture itself is unproductive and less labour absorbing, then migration may not benefit the non-migrant labours and migration becomes involuntary livelihood strategy for them. In the case of Bihar, the latter statement is investigated and discussed to find a positive relationship between migration, unemployment rates and poverty.

While considering the difference in the socio-economic conditions, demography, culture and age of the labourers in north Bihar, the present study focuses on the secondary data available from NSSO, Census of India and Economic survey of Bihar. It uses both qualitative and quantitative analysis and descriptive methods to understand the various socio-economic facets of migration, changing livelihood and migration patterns. It examines the real cause of labour migration in the north region of Bihar. the study is important particularly when the pandemic compounded the impact of migration, out, reverse and circular. The study will also explore the role of policy making and good governance in improving the existing situation in the state of Bihar.

Fig. 1



Map of Bihar

Fig. 2



Map of North Bihar

Brief Statistical Profile of North Bihar

The state of Bihar is divided into 9 divisions. Out of 9 divisions of Bihar, 5 divisions namely Saran (including Saran, Siwan, Gopalganj as districts), Tirhut (consisting of West Champaran, East Champaran, Sitamarhi, Seohar, Muzaffarpur, and Vaishali districts), Darbhanga (consisting of Madhubani, Darbhanga and Samastipur districts), Kosi (consisting of Supaul, Madhepura and Saharsa districts) and Purnia (consisting of Araria, Kishanganj, Purnia and Katihar districts) falls in north Bihar. As per the Economic survey of Bihar 2011, districts like Saharsa, Madhepura, Darbhanga and Supaul are the poorest among all the districts of the region. In terms of literacy, Tirhut division shows a low level of literacy rate between 50-55 per cent except Muzaffarpur and Vaishali districts. Even in the Darbhanga division, except Samastipur (61.8 per cent), the other two districts have less than 60 per cent of literate people. The Purnea division of Bihar is the least literate division of the region with the average literacy rate is marginally higher than 50 per cent.

Geographically, Bihar is one of the most flood prone states of India. Particularly, north Bihar with almost 76 per cent of population experiencing recurring floods (ICRIER 2017). Every year the rivers of north Bihar, cause floods with large amounts of sediments spreading over the plains. The recurring floods have adversely affected flora and fauna in this region for ages. The Flood Management Information System of Bihar reported that during 2004-13, approximately, 71.1 million people and 14.8 million animals were affected by the severe floods and approximately 4 million hectares of cropped area were also devastated (ICRIER 2017).

A broad profile of labour force in Bihar, collected from National Statistical Office, 2018-19) on the basis of indicators like Worker Population Ratio (WPR), Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), and Unemployment rate (UR) indicates that both WPR and LFPR are lowest in Bihar when compared among the major states in India whereas the unemployment rate is above in both rural and urban areas in comparison to the national average unemployment rate (Table 1, 2 and 4). Also, the state of Bihar, registered lowest female labour force participation both in urban as well as rural areas at just 4.0 percent in rural areas and with 6.5 percent in urban areas (lower than the all-India average of 26.4 and 20.4 percent respectively) (Bihar Economic Survey 2021).

Table 1

Worker Population Ratio (WPR) by State (2018-19) 15 years and above						
State	Rural			Urban		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
Andhra Pradesh	73.6	45.5	59.2	69.3	24.0	46.0
Assam	73.4	11.7	43.9	65.3	11.2	39.1
Bihar	66.0	4.0	36.6	62.6	5.7	35.1
Chhattisgarh	74.5	52.6	63.8	73.9	27.1	50.3
Gujarat	77.5	25	52.1	75.2	16.0	46.5
Haryana	67.2	12.8	41	67.5	16.8	43.8
Jharkhand	74.5	23.3	47.6	62.6	10.8	36.1
Karnataka	74.2	27.2	51.1	72.4	19.3	46.5
Kerela	67.6	26.4	45.5	67.7	24.1	44.1
Madhya Pradesh	78.4	31.6	55.9	67.8	16.4	42.7
Maharashtra	71.2	37.3	54.7	69.0	19.9	44.9
Odisha	74.6	24.2	48.9	67.4	15.8	41.0
Punjab	66.6	17.3	42.7	72.4	17.1	41.1
Rajasthan	70.4	35.9	53.2	67.3	13.9	41.1
Tamil Nadu	71.6	41.5	55.6	68.1	26.4	46.8
Telangana	66.2	45.4	55.4	66.6	20.4	43.8
Uttar Pradesh	70.4	14.6	42.0	62.9	9.2	36.9
West Bengal	79.9	20.6	50.4	73.0	23.8	48.2
India	72.2	25.5	48.9	68.6	18.4	43.9

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (MoSPI) NSO, 2019

Table 2

Unemployment rate of Bihar (2018-19)						
State/Country	Rural			Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
India	5.5	3.5	3.3	7.0	9.8	7.6
Bihar	10.2	1.4	9.8	10.3	11.9	10.4

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (MoSPI)NSO, 2019

Distribution of Workers in Bihar During 2011 under the various Economic Classification as in 2011 Census

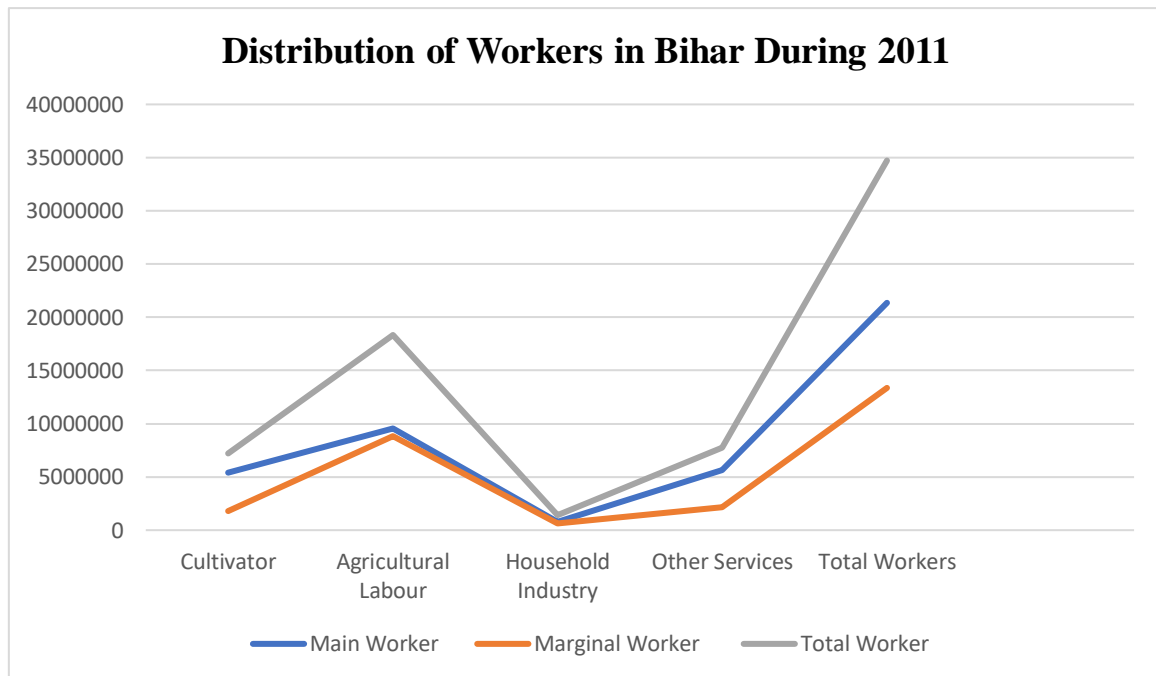
Table 3

Economic Classification	Main Worker	Marginal Worker	Total Worker
1	2	3	4
Cultivator	5413181	1783045	7196226

Agricultural Labour	9537418	8808231	18345649
Household Industry	779576	631632	1411208
Other Services	5629436	2142468	7771904
Total Workers	21359611	13365376	34724987

Source: Census 2011

Fig. 3



Source: Census of India 2011

However, the economic classification of workers in Bihar which indicates the occupational structure and the percentage of marginal workers in the total work force of that classification indicates a very high percentage of marginal workers in agriculture (48 per cent) and household industry (44.7 per cent) as highlighted in Table 3. This clearly indicates that the major reason for circular migration among the agricultural marginal labourers in Bihar is for their bare subsistence. Furthermore, the absence of employment in household industry especially in urban areas acts another important and a binding constraint for migration among large scale unskilled marginal workers.

Table 4

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR in percentage) of Bihar 2018-19		
Age group: 15-59 years		
State/Country	Rural	Urban

	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
India	80.6	28.3	54.5	79.6	22.5	51.6
Bihar	76.3	4.2	41.5	72.8	7.0	40.9

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (MoSPI) NSO, 2020

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), is an important economic indicator which represents that percentage of population which supplies or is ready to offer labour for the purpose of various economic activities and therefore comprises both ‘employed’ and ‘unemployed’ people. The latest data by the National Statistical Organisation (NSO) 2019, indicates that the female labour force participation is abysmally low with just 4 per cent in rural areas and 7 in urban areas (refer Table 4). Even the male LFPR is lower than the national level in both urban and rural areas. The 66th Round of the NSS data related to employment and work participation revealed that Indian female labour force participation rates have been extremely low, in which Bihar ranked at the bottom with an appalling labour force participation rate of just 7.2 per cent among rural women (Rodgers 2012). The dominance of the unproductive primary sector causing under employment and seasonal unemployment, widespread poverty and illiteracy results in low LFPR in rural Bihar.

Table 5

State/Country	Dependency Ratio of Persons in Bihar (2018-19)		
	Rural	Urban	Persons
India	49.5	40.5	46.6
Bihar	61.1	52.8	60.3

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (MoSPI) NSO, 2020

As an important indicator of economic burden carried by the working population, Bihar indicates a higher dependency ratio of persons (**greater than 60 per cent**) which is significantly higher than the national percentage (**refer Table 5**). Apparently, another strong reason for migration in the state of Bihar is that the low-income persons and households are unable to cope with such a high degree of dependency and therefore migration from rural areas is the only alternative available for them to meet their basic requirements. With such a high dependency ratio, the state of Bihar is experiencing major economic crisis like increase outmigration of the working population, increase in elderly population in rural areas as compared to young population and increase in the fiscal spending/burden of the state government on running social security schemes and related services for the dependents. At this juncture it is important to mention that Bihar, a state with a very high dependency ratio and poor financial conditions, will require significantly higher spending on sustainable social security schemes, medical services and other geriatric services for the elderly. Consequently, it will result in high burden of financial outlays of the state government. There is no denial that the widespread unemployment and migration in the state of Bihar will result in enormous socio-economic cost. The government of India, the government of Bihar and the World Bank had already signed a credit agreement of \$84 million to deliver and support better quality social protection programs for the poor and marginalised people in Bihar (World Bank 2014). Since, the state of Bihar is one of the economically marginalised states of India, the above project will help in implementation and better coverage of social security programmes. However, if we look at the recent budgetary allocation of the state government of Bihar, the state allocated 17.9% of its expenditure towards education which is higher than average spending done by other states (14.8%) (Bihar Budget Analysis 2023-24). The state government has also increased the allocation for health (7%) and rural development (10.7%) as compared to the average spending done by the states in the financial year 2023-24. In the fiscal year 2023-24, the social sector spending as a part of total expenditure amounts to 48% in the state of Bihar (Bihar Budget 2023-24).

Economic consideration is the most driving factor for migration from rural area in the northern region of Bihar. It is the youth who prefers migration in the want of work leaving behind older male and female family members in their own state (Carswell, De Neve & Subramanyam 2022). These migrant labours are

less educated, professionally less skilled and technologically least updated, as a consequence they choose their destination of migration where more casual jobs and available such as most of the informal sectors (Sarkar 2019).

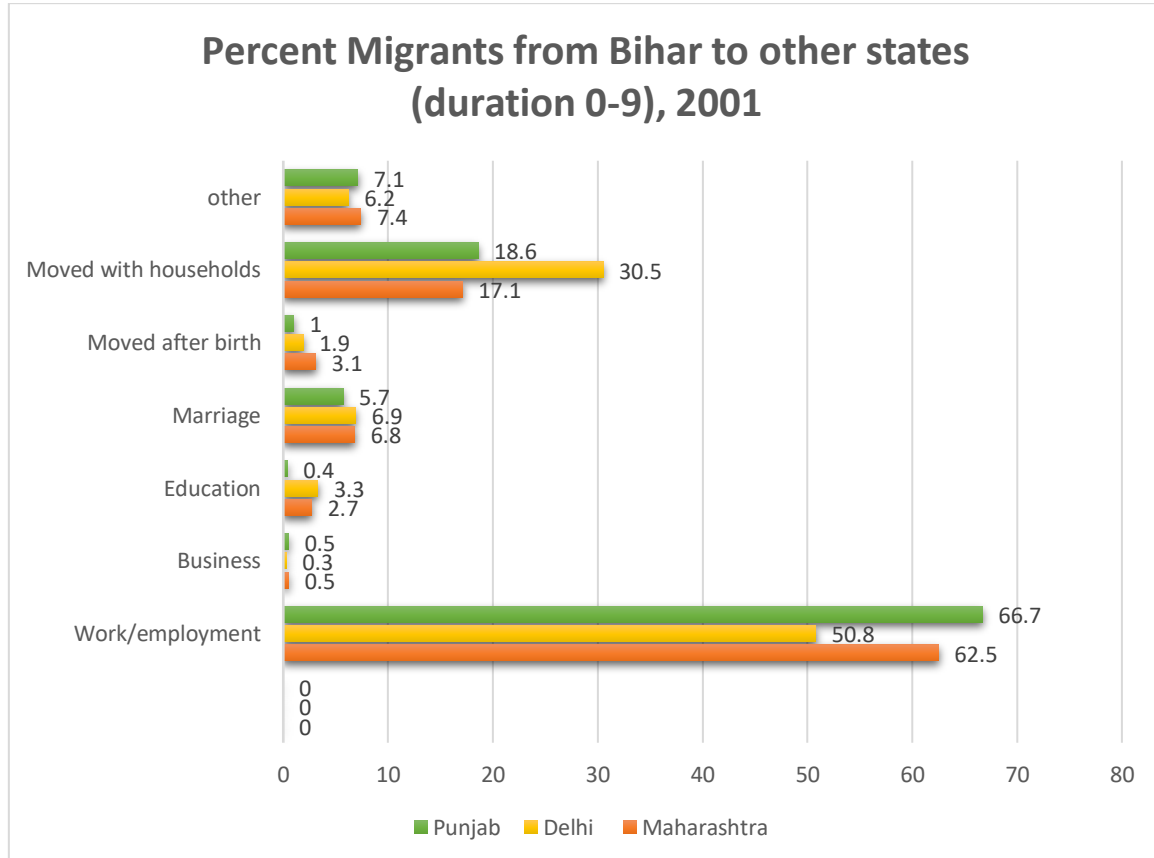
On the subject of places for migration by the residents of Bihar, the census 2001 revealed that most preferred states were Maharashtra, Delhi and Punjab (refer Table 6). The most popular reason for migration was ‘work and employment’ followed by ‘moved with household.’

Table 6

Reason for migration (Bihar)	Percent Migrants from Bihar to other states (duration 0-9), 2001		
	Maharashtra	Delhi	Punjab
Work/employment	62.5	50.8	66.7
Business	0.5	0.3	0.5
Education	2.7	3.3	0.4
Marriage	6.8	6.9	5.7
Moved after birth	3.1	1.9	1.0
Moved with households	17.1	30.5	18.6
Other	7.4	6.2	7.1

Source: Comparative study done by authors from the data of Census of India, 2001 (Data Highlights – Table D1, D2 & D3)

Fig:4



Source: Census of India, 2001, Data Highlights – Table D1, D2 & D3

However, the analysis of recent data on migration as discussed in the Census, 2011 shows a major shift in the choice of destination states for all migrants from Bihar. Delhi was most preferred state followed by Jharkhand and west Bengal (refer Table.7)

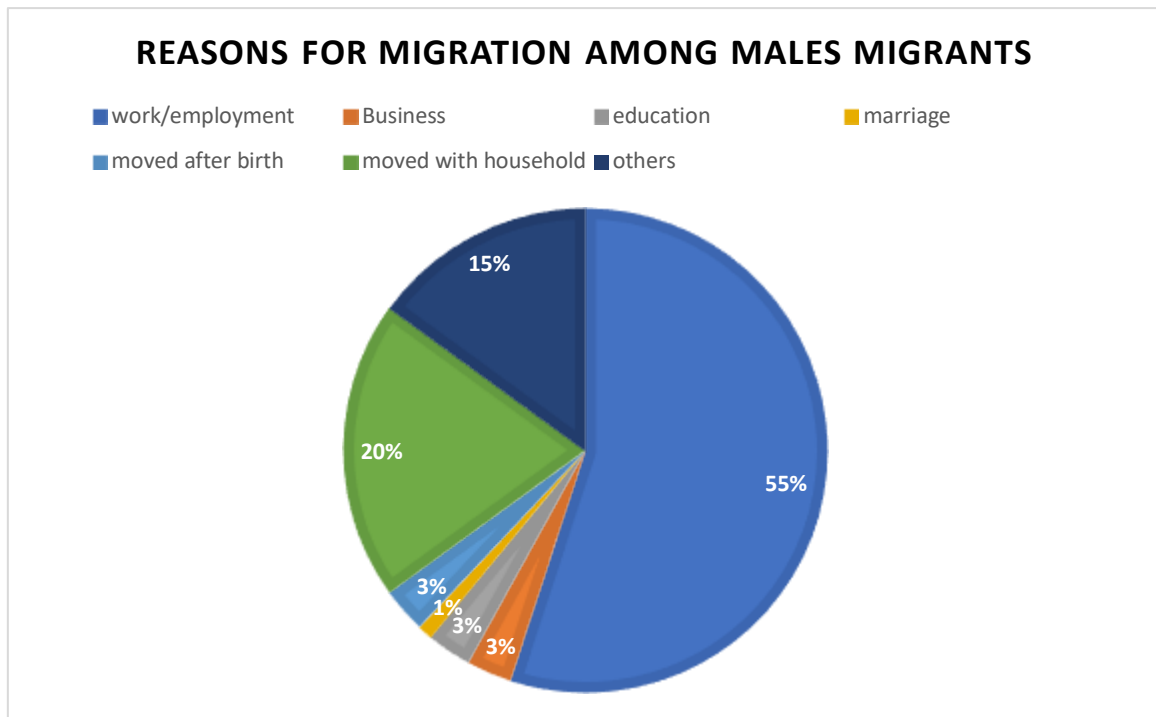
Table. 7

Major Destination States for all Migrants from Bihar, 2011	
Delhi	19.34
Jharkhand	14.12
West Bengal	13.65
Maharashtra	10.55
Uttar Pradesh	10.24
Haryana	7.06
Punjab	6.89
Gujarat	4.79
Rest of India	13.35
Total	100

Source: Census 2011

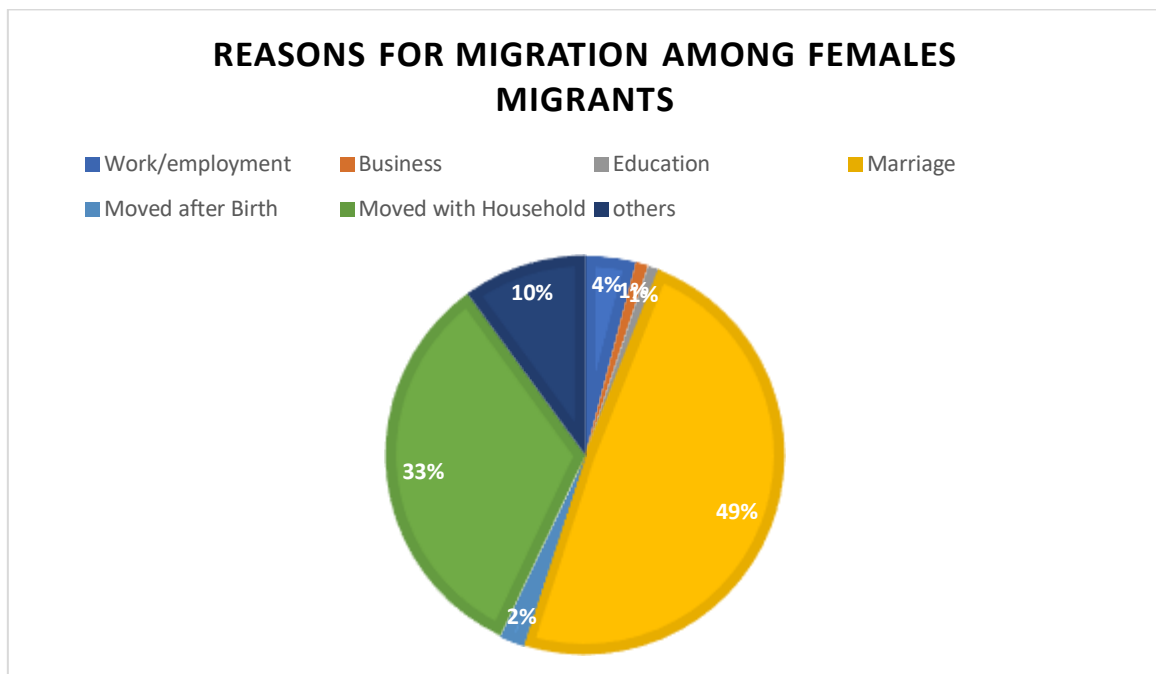
It is interesting to note that even after a decade, the census 2011 data shows that employment -related reasons are still the major cause of migration in Bihar. The Census, 2011 D-series data on migration elaborates different pattern and different causes of migration among both males and females as shown below:

Fig:5



Source: Census 2011, D- Series data on migration

Fig. 6



Source: Census 2011, D- Series data on migration

A comparative analysis of both male and female migrants reveals that male migrants migrate for the employment reason (55 per cent) while a very meagre percentage (2 per cent) of female migrants migrate for the same reason.

Recent Trends in The Working Population of North Bihar

According to the census of India 2011, the working population in North Bihar has shown a declining trend in the category of agricultural cultivators and an increasing trend in the category of agricultural labourers. Out of total agricultural workforce in Bihar, almost 72 per cent consists of agricultural labourers and only 28 per cent are the cultivators as compared to the national average of 55 per cent of agricultural labourers and 45 per cent of cultivators respectively. District wise classification of working population in Bihar is explained in detail in table 8.

District Wise Classification of Working Population in Bihar- 2011 (in thousand)

Table. 8

District	Marginal Workers	Category of Marginal Workers			
		Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry Workers	Other workers
Saran	494	68	321	20	85
Siwan	470	100	264	15	91
Gopalganj	365	70	230	14	51
Muzaffarpur	636	75	403	30	130
East Champaran	605	74	442	20	69
West Champaran	681	62	534	20	65
Sitamarhi	361	40	245	17	59
Sheohar	78	8	54	6	10
Vaishali	344	48	217	14	65
Darbhangha	493	57	341	21	74
Madhubani	562	107	376	23	56

Saharsa	286	46	201	10	29
Supaul	405	59	303	12	31
Madhepura	334	55	245	8	26
Purnia	367	37	270	13	47
Kishanganj	144	18	102	6	20
Araria	373	52	277	12	32
Kathihar	346	30	272	10	34
Bihar	13,356	1,778	8,808	629	2,141

Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Bihar, 2017

The outnumbering of agricultural labourers as compared to the cultivators can be majorly related to the issues of agriculture becoming unproductive and decline in the size of the holdings on one hand and increase in the employment in non-agricultural sector and increase in the wage rates for the labourers on the other hand. A study done by the National Council of Applied Economic Research in 2019 confirms that one of the biggest challenges faced by the state of Bihar is the increase in the number of land holdings with size less than 1hec (NCAER 2019). This has caused livelihood challenges for the farmers and their families and therefore incidents of out-migration from the agricultural sector has increased. Therefore, it is easier to corroborate the findings of out-migration, with poor agricultural productivity of this region. In one of the findings of government report on migration it is observed that the districts accounting for top 25 per cent of total male out-migration in India includes Madhubani and Darbhanga districts (Madhubani at 6th position and Darbhanga at 8th position relatively) of north Bihar.

As an economically marginalised state, Bihar has to address and act upon the economic quagmires resulting from the labour migration and unemployment. The news about some of the states handling the reverse migrating labourers and their distressing condition inefficiently during the pandemic and post pandemic created a negative image of these states including Bihar. There is a causal relationship between unemployment and migration, but it is always underestimated and undermined. Even the two major sources of data regarding the migration, NSSO and the Census, hardly give importance to short term, seasonal and circular migration and merely focus on long term migration of labourers considering it only as workers mobility. The unique geophysical environment, recurring floods, and submergence of agricultural land during monsoon every year has greatly affected every aspect of human life in north Bihar. North Bihar districts are densely populated, economically backward, and infamous for large scale unemployment, rampant out-migration, floods, poverty, and socio-economic inequality. The quality and productivity of labour and employment opportunities in the north Bihar is poor due to low productive and less diversified agricultural sector and small industrial base. Deep-rooted structural crisis, overdependence on agriculture, dearth of industries (especially agro-based industries), closure of existing industries, population pressure and most importantly falling agriculture productivity due to recurrent floods in that region are other issues.

Researchers find that with a high level of out-migration ranging between 5- 10 per cent of the working population in 2001 (MOHUA 2017), Darbhanga and Madhubani districts of north Bihar are experiencing major demographic as well as macro-economic structural changes and are lagging on the parameters of socio-economic development that needs to be addressed urgently, efficiently and systematically by the state government. It is mostly male members of low-income groups who prefer migration. The issue of migration, unemployment and livelihood challenges have also increased due to negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the labours. The research establishes that there is a causal link between unemployment, poverty and migration. The analysis confirms that there is a direct and positive relationship between unemployment, inequality and poverty on one hand and the demand for socio-economic welfare on the other hand. The low labour force participation ratio in the region also indicates a higher migration rate. Besides, availability of higher wages in other non-agricultural occupation like masonry, plumbing, carpentry attracts migration. Migrants prefer to choose casual and informal work like rickshaw pulling, construction work, domestic helper, shop attendant etc in destination place because such jobs are available throughout the year. The low esteem job in rural area also forces for migration in other higher rewarding jobs in urban areas. Therefore, 'push factors' are mainly responsible for migration from the north Bihar region to other developed states in India.

While a great deal of research has been done on the potential impact of migration in the host areas, less focus has been on how migration affects rural areas and economically unstable states. Most of the studies are based on the incidental and indirect impacts of migration. In the light of the above-mentioned facts, the state government and policy makers must take immediate measures to address the challenges related to high migration in this region otherwise migration in this region will have positive effect on rural poverty if remittances flow disproportionately into poor households. The state government's very objective of promoting economic welfare will be greatly undermined by widespread unemployment followed by migration, which will erode the fiscal base of the state of Bihar on one hand and will raise the demands for spending on various public welfare schemes for the marginal workers and unemployed on the other hand. There will be increase in the social and economic costs of unemployment which will adversely affect the macroeconomic stability of north Bihar. The inefficiency and ineffective implementation of existing laws, economic policies and schemes to deal with the problems of labour unemployment and migration will worsen the situation in the state of Bihar.

Access of Social Protection and Social Justice by the Migrants in India

Migrant workers in every sphere of the world are mostly excluded from social protection coverage. Even if they are given legal rights, they still face major challenge in accessing such benefits and social protections. With very limited access to state benefits schemes, the status of migrants is nothing more than a 'clients' in the cities rather than 'legitimate claimants (Rao, Narain & Chakraborty 2020).' Moreover, with very limited bargaining positions, compounded by poverty, the only option left for the migrants as an alternative strategy to survive is to prefer common destination or similar work and as a consequence, migration itself can be seen as a measure of social protection outside home state (Rao, Narain & Chakraborty 2020). Article 19 (d) and Article 19 (1) (g) of the Constitution of India guarantees to all the citizens the freedom to move, reside and work in any part of the territory of India. Likewise, Article 15 of the Constitution of India, prohibits any form of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and even place of birth. The Constitution of India firmly believes in the universal access to all forms of rights i.e., civil, political, economic, social, cultural and human rights for every citizen of India. The seventh schedule list 1 under Article 246 of the Constitution of India also deals with the issues related to interstate migration where the powers to make law is entrusted to the union government. However, despite such democratic principles mentioned in the Constitution of India, the issue and challenges faced by the migrant labourers in the informal sectors are not adequately addressed. Since, most of the migrant labourers belong to poor and backward communities who are illiterate and ignorant of their rights, the issue of extension and acceptance of human rights across the labour market is a real challenge. Also, India being one of the founding members of the International Labour Organisation has ratified most of the conventions related to administrative measures for the protection and advancement of the interest of the labour. Ratification of various conventions by India makes it legally binding for her that laws and practices are in conformity with the

relevant convention. The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (Convention No 111) which consists of a total of 14 articles, states that discrimination constitutes a violation of rights enunciated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ILO 1958). Though there are statutory provisions against discrimination at workplace under Article 14, Article 15, Article 16 and Article 39 of the Constitution of India, most of the labour laws related to the unorganised sector are not effectively implemented. The most significant piece of legislation dealing with migrant labours is the Inter-State Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act 1979 which regulates the employment of inter-state migrant workmen and establishes their terms of service (CLC 2024). The responsibility of enforcement of the provisions of the Act is on central and the State governments. However, the Act suffers from a limitation, it does not apply to the establishments employing fewer than 5 inter-state migrant workers or workers without contractors. As a result, a significant number of migrant workers are not protected by these safeguards (Srivastava, Sasikumar 2003). The absence of uniform labour standards in the unorganised sector particularly related to migrant workmen is the major issue which needs to be immediately and adequately addressed by the union as well as the state government.

Conclusion

From the study it can be concluded that migration in the above region of Bihar is an involuntary livelihood strategy and an instinct to move to more economically advanced places by the workmen for a better living. Out of all the factors responsible for migration, push factors due to unemployment distress emerges as a dominant factor of migration. Despite the efforts taken by the state government, recurrent flood, low agricultural productivity, seasonal unemployment, and lack of basic amenities are still major problems in the districts of north Bihar. Furthermore, absence of proper marketing and forward, backward linkages can be other major causes of migration in the above regions. There is a shift in the choice of destination states by the migrants from Bihar. Choice of destination state largely depends upon the availability of social infrastructure and also on legal and policy framework of the state government. Besides, savings and remittances by the migrant workers are also one of the reasons for migration in a particular state or city.

It is imperative to understand that the state government of Bihar must make consistent efforts and intentions to address the issue of migration. Various employment policies, schemes related to migrant workers need to be implemented more efficiently and timely monitored in order to ensure that they reach the intended beneficiaries. The miseries of migrant workers can be reduced by economic development, revival of the closed industries, promotion of agro-based industries along with a variety of government initiatives related to social security and welfare programmes. The state of Bihar needs a comprehensive data base on migrant workers, their skill mapping and detailed action plan on their employment. Unit-level analysis is necessary for policy formulation and execution regarding migrant workers in the state of Bihar. Gram Panchayats can actively assist in resource pooling for the migrants at rural level and maintain record related to such activities which will significantly reduce the transaction cost of the state government related to data collection. In the prevailing economic scenario, huge exodus or migration of labours from north Bihar cannot be contained or averted however, awareness programmes related to rights and entitlement and migration sensitization programmes by the administration can make them aware about their legal rights, existing labour laws and also complaint redressal mechanisms. At national level, establishment of a well-defined labour market mechanism through efficient enforcement of labour laws can effectively promote and safeguard rights of migrant labourers. In fact, majority of the issues associated with migrant workers can be resolved through a multi-dimensional approach involving state governments, employers, trade unions and civil society organisations.

Last but not the least, one should not forget that constitutional imperative should be the guiding principle in achievement of economic imperatives. Bihar's economic transformation lies in agricultural growth, competitive manufacturing, industrialisation ensuring high growth and new employment opportunities for the migrant workers.

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