

FEMALE MIGRATION IN INDIA: EXPLORING TREND, PATTERN AND DETERMINANTS

Ajanya Suraj ¹ and Shaharban. V ²

Abstract

Migration indicates transition of a person's primary residence from one location to another. With expansion of capitalist economic system, rate of migration has stepped with wide-ranging movements of wealth and human resources accelerated by globalization. Economy of host nation benefits greatly from the contributions of migrants. In 2022, India set a new annual record for remittances with \$100 billion followed by Mexico and China. However, unlike rest of the globe, India has long had a significantly higher female migration rate than male migration rate. This paper makes an effort to examine the trend, pattern and major factors that determines female migration in India. One of the objectives of this paper is to examine the reason, trend and spatial characteristics of long-distance female interstate migration in India by utilising secondary data from Indian Census, NSSO, PLFS, Economic reviews and IOM Migration Data Portal.

Keywords:

Female migration, Interstate migration in India, Migration and gender, Internal migration trends in India

Introduction

Migration is becoming a worldwide phenomenon in modern period. It is recognized as an indicator of changing political and economic circumstances on a national and international scale. It measures differences and disparities in social and economic conditions between different places. In addition to need, people may migrate voluntarily or involuntarily. Human rights violations, disasters, wars, climate change, job opportunities, and professional growth are just a few of the variables that affect people's free mobility. UN defined migration as moving from one migration-defining area to another, typically requiring a change of domicile and crossing administrative boundaries. In contemporary era, migration has spread throughout the world. It has integrated itself into global urbanization and

¹ Ajanya Suraj, M.A Economics, Kannur University, Dr. Janaki Ammal Campus, Palayad-670661, Kerala. Cell No - +91 7907748885 Email- ajanyasuraj@gmail.com

²Shaharban. V, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Kannur University, Dr. Janaki Ammal Campus, Palayad - 670661, Kerala. Cell No -+919400337417 Email-shaharbanv@kannuruniv.ac.in

industrialisation process as a result of growth of transportation and communication. It has been noted that widespread population migration from towns to towns, from villages to towns, and across nations has coincided with industrialization and economic progress in majority of these countries. In 2020, 'female migrants comprised somewhat less than half (135 million or 48.1 per cent) of global international migrant stock according to latest global estimates available' (UNDESA, 2020). 'Comparatively higher share of female migrants in North America and Europe, as well as in some countries in Asia over the last decades is explained, among other reasons, by the demand of service sector workers and family reunification policies' (Abel and Cohen, 2022). 'The highest participation gap was found in high income countries (12 per cent points between migrant women and non-migrant women) and lower-middle income countries (10 per cent points). In all four income groups (high, upper-middle, lower-middle and low income countries) labour force participation rate of migrant men was higher than non-migrant men in 2019. Lower labour force participation of migrant women in low-income countries could be attributed to a high share of informal employment. Migrant women specifically face a number of obstacles in accessing financial services and products including mobility constraints, distance and safety impediments, lack of financial literacy and limited access to technology' (UN Women, 2022). There are 455.7 million migrants worldwide, of which 146.1 million men and 309.6 million women. This is almost twice as many migrants as were reported in 1991, both male and female. 90 per cent of these migrant women work as contract labor in informal economy, including small and medium-sized businesses, manufacturing, household work, construction, transportation, mining, and agriculture and related activities.

Internal migration is recognized as having a profound influence on both social and economic development, especially in developing countries. In India, around 37 per cent of nation's total population was classified as migrants based on their last known place of residence that accounts approximately 450 million as per 2011 census. This figure represents nearly double the 225 million internal migrants recorded in 1991 Census. While trend of female migration is on the rise, historically, individuals have relocated from one region to another in search of improved life prospects, thereby placing gender at the forefront of migration discussions. According to 2011 census data, there were 45.6 million individuals suffering from migraines across the country, with 27.8 million residing in rural areas and 17.8 million in urban settings. There were 30.96 crore female migrants and 14.6 crore male migrants. When analyzing female migration and gender, it is imperative to incorporate a social interpretation based on gender norms and culture.

Review of literature

In practically every region of the world, per cent of female migrants is steadily rising, and India is not an exception to this pattern. However, unlike rest of the

globe, India has long had a significantly higher female migration rate than male migration rate. There are 45.3 Crore (453 million) domestic migrants in India, according to 2011 Census. Alternatively stated, 37 per cent of Indians are immigrants. Comparatively, just roughly 30.5 per cent of total population in 2001 was made up of migrants. Main motivating factor was marriage for women and employment for males (Dharmendra Pratap Singh, 1998). Changing employment profiles of migrant women in urban India should be looked at whether women's post-urban employment challenges their gendered stereotypes about family and domestic responsibilities (Arpita and Saraswati, 2009). Relational domain was the major focus of migrant males and their labor. All economic indicators and female migration rates have a positive correlation, making economic considerations one of the main predictors of female migration. There is a significant relationship between male female migration rates, indicating that women relocate in response to males (Mahapatro, 2010). Migration is location-specific phenomenon and a thorough understanding of women's migration experiences depends on various factors connected with history, social class, gender, color, and ethnicity. While marriage influences female migration, job is the main factor driving male migration. Rural to urban migration is impacted by social, political, housing, and job difficulties. Feminization of domestic labor mobility in emerging economies emphasizes hazards to female migrants' health and their travel habits (Ray et al, 2015). In order to create programs and policies that help female migrants, economic reasons have a considerable impact on female migration, as evidenced by research, which also shows a high association between male and female migration rates (Taranjeet Singh, 2016).

A significant proportion of migrants in India are females, representing 80 per cent of all internal migrants as reported by NSSO, and 70.7 per cent of internal migrants according to 2001 Census. According to estimates, 90 per cent of these migrant women work as contract labor in informal economy, including small and medium-sized businesses, manufacturing, household work, construction, transportation, mining, and agriculture and related activities. Although marriage continues to be the main factor driving women to migrate, Census data reveals that Indian women are also doing so for employment and education. Inter-state migrants made up only 4 per cent of India's population in 2011, a rate that has been essentially constant since 2001. In India between 2011 and 2016 around 9 million inter-state migration cases were identified (Economic Survey of India: 2017). Two states with largest sources are Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, closely followed by Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan. Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala are the main travel destinations.

Data and methodology

This study is primarily concentrated on identifying the pattern and reason for female

interstate migration in India. Primary sources of information regarding internal migration in India are the population census and migration surveys conducted by NSSO. These two sources provide extensive information on female migration pattern. The Census defines a migrant as an individual who resides in a location different from their place of birth or who has relocated from their usual residence to another area. According to both surveys, a resident is defined as someone who has lived in a particular location for a minimum of six months, excluding recently born infants. The Census collects data on various aspects of migrants, including age, sex, reasons for migration, duration of migration, and place of origin. In addition, NSS gathers supplementary information regarding migrant's household, such as consumption expenditure, educational attainment, employment status, industry, occupation at place of origin, and remittance flows. To analyze migration trends and patterns among women from 1991 to 2011, secondary sources such as Census of India, NSSO data, PLFS data, economic reviews, academic journals, and the Migration Data Portal (IOM) are employed.

Results and discussion

India is ranked first among top 5 nations of migrant origin, based on 2022 World Migration Report. With 18 million immigrants, India is the country with greatest immigrant population worldwide. With almost 11 million migrants, Mexico is the second-largest country of origin. As per the World Bank analysis covering the years 2015 to 2020, India held the top spot in both of those years, with 68.91 per cent in 2015 and 83.15 per cent in 2020. India is the nation that receives the most remittances from abroad. China is currently in second place.

Geographical barriers had a crucial role in preventing migration in early stages of history. Migration was only able to demonstrate distance due to a lack of transportation infrastructure, linguistic skills, literacy, etc. Women living within a state were not counted as migrants during early 19th century; only migration over state lines was. However, in the current environment, migration is a major driver of industrialization, urbanization, and technological advancement, and it is aided by infrastructure and transportation amenities that are easily accessible. Migration patterns in India show that there are more migrants than there are people who have been counted overall. Pattern and trend of female migration in India were ascertained by utilizing census data comprising from 1991 to 2011. If a person's birthplace differs from the area where they are being counted, the Census of India considers them to be migrants. Migration is influenced by a wide range of issues, including those pertaining to social infrastructure, economics, politics, the environment, migratory stock, and demography.

As per 2011 census, up to 21 crore women in India migrated for marriage, making up around 90 per cent of all female migration. In contrast, male migration is

much less common, with only 2.53 per cent of male migrants migrating for marriage between 1991 and 2011; most male migrants, or roughly 55 per cent of all female migrants in 2011, were moved with their households. Work is the main trigger of migration for men in India; over 80 per cent of males and 15.47 per cent of females migrate for employment.

Table 1: Total Migrants in India (1991-2011)

Year	Total Migrants (in million)			Migrants to total population (%)		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1991	64.3	167.8	232.1	14.7	41.6	27.6
2001	93.3	221.1	314.5	17.5	44.5	30.5
2011	146.1	309.6	455.7	23.4	52.6	37.6

Source: Census of India, 1991–2011

There are 455.7 migrants as per 2011 census, of which males and females constitute 309.6 million and 146.1 million respectively. This represents almost twice as many male and female migrants as were recorded in 1991 (table.1). There is an increase in female migration over time to the total population is referred to as 'feminization of migration'. The statistics shows that female migration is increasing more quickly than male migration. Over the years, proportion of female migration to total population augmented from 41.6 to 52.6. This shift, increase in female migration may be attributed to a number of causes, including globalization, the emergence of a gender-specific job market, demand of service sector workers, government policies and others.

Table 2: Migration Rate (in per cent) PLFS 2020-21

Category of Person	Total Migrants (in per cent)		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Male	5.9	22.5	10.7
Female	48	47.8	47.9
Total	26.5	34.9	28.9

Source: PLFS, July 2020-2021

According to PLFS 2020–21 data, migration rate of women is much higher in rural area compared to urban and trends of male migration is in favour of urban area (table.2). Understanding the role of women in migration requires not just the sex-based analysis of data, but also an understanding of the ways in which gender

relations impact each step of migration cycle.

Distribution of Migrants by Distance

The census data primarily reflect patterns of short and long-distance migration without specifying the actual distances traveled by individuals. This data is organized based on various factors, including a person's migration status, which is determined by their place of birth, previous residence, duration of stay, age, and gender. In the context of India, administrative divisions such as districts and states serve as the basis for these classifications. Analyzing 'distance aspect' in relation to the four principal categories of migrants is also important.

International Migrants: People who are documented within the geographical boundary of India but have their origins outside the country.

Inter State Migrants: Individuals who are documented in one particular state but were born in a different state.

Inter District Migrants: Persons who are registered in one district while originating from another district within the same state.

Intra District Migrants: Individuals who were born within a district but are recorded in a different location within the district.

Table 3: Population of India based on distribution of migrants by distance: 1991-2011

	Census of 1991			Census of 2001			Census of 2011		
Migrants by distance	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Intra district	6.74	26.50	16.24	8.03	28.0	17.67	12.40	31.79	21.81
Inter district	4.25	10.07	7.05	4.65	10.48	7.47	6.08	14.17	10.01
Interstate	2.79	3.75	3.25	3.69	4.56	4.11	3.98	5.35	4.64
International	0.82	0.83	0.83	0.59	0.60	0.59	0.47	0.40	0.44

Source: census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011, Govt. of India

This study investigates migration patterns and characteristics of various migration

flows in India from 1991 to 2011. During this period, intra-district migration accounted for 21.8 per cent, while inter-district migration represented 10.0 per cent, inter-state migration 4.7 per cent, and international migration a mere 0.44 per cent. Notably, proportion of intra-district migration saw an increase of approximately 4.5 and 2.5 when compared to 2001 and 1991 census data, respectively, whereas proportion of international migrants experienced a decline. The most significant reduction was observed in international migration, which decreased from 0.8 in 1991 to 0.6 in 2001, and further to 0.4 in 2011 (table.3).

A comprehensive analysis of various migration types, encompassing both interstate and intrastate movements, is conducted, alongside an examination of migration trends from 1991 to 2011. This includes transitions occurring from rural to urban areas, rural to rural locations, and urban to urban settings. According to PLFS 2020-21 data, 63.3 per cent of females migrated from rural to rural areas.

Table 4: Per cent Distribution of Migrants by Location, PLFS 2020-21

Category of Migrants	Migrants by Location			Internal Migrants			
	Same State	Another State	Other Countries	R to R	U to R	R to U	U to U
Male	65.6	31.4	2.9	18	20.8	33.5	27.6
Female	92.6	7.2	0.2	63.3	7.8	15.6	13.2
Person	87.5	11.8	0.7	55	10.2	18.9	15.9

Source: PLFS, July 2020-2021

Women constituted a substantial portion of all four migration streams, primarily driven by the necessity of marriage migration. The rise in within-state migration can be linked to increase in the number of districts between 1991 and 2011. As per PLFS 2020-21, 63.3 per cent of females migrated from rural to rural followed by urban to urban migration (table 4).

Educational Status of female migrants

The categorization of migrants according to their educational attainment—ranging from illiterate to literate, literate but not having completed matriculation, matriculated but not graduated, graduates, and those with postgraduate or diploma qualifications—indicates that among the 176.28 million illiterate migrants, approximately 80 per cent are women. Furthermore, proportion of female migrants tends to decline as educational levels rise (table.5).

Table 5: Educational status of migrants by sex, 2011 census (in million)

Educational status	Males	Females	Total
Illiterate	33.94	142.34	176.28
Literate	112.21	167.3	279.51
Literate but below matric	52.78	95.75	148.53
Matric but below graduate	33.1	42.34	75.44
Graduate and other than graduate	14.04	14.21	28.25
Post graduate or diploma	4.13	2.72	6.85

Source: 2011 India census

A wide gender gap is visible in educational attainment among men and women. In contrast to male, females share is low at all education levels. Women lost their wage work mostly as a result of structural changes such automation, deforestation, privatization of common property resources, and different development programs implemented in rural areas.

Reason for female Migration in India

‘A greater number of women than men continue to migrate primarily for marriage or family reunification purposes’ (UNDESA 2015), approximately 45 per cent of all European Economic Area permanent migration are ‘family oriented’ (OECD 2013). Nevertheless, there is an increasing trend of women migrating for educational or employment opportunities (UN INSTRAW 2007). Currently, a higher proportion of young women compared to young men are pursuing education abroad (UNDESA 2015), and in various European nations, highly skilled female migrants surpass their male counterparts (Dumont et al. 2007). ‘Women constitute 83 per cent of the global domestic workforce, with a notable segment of Asia's 21.5 million domestic workers being young female migrants’ (UN Women 2012). Discriminatory and unequal social norms can act as catalysts for female migration. OECD’s SIGI index indicates that discriminatory norms within institutions significantly influence decisions regarding female south-south migration.’ While women and girls may choose to migrate to escape gender-based discrimination, such discrimination can simultaneously limit their migration options’ (Ferrant et al. 2014). It is estimated that ‘Europe is home to at least one million undocumented migrant domestic workers, with Asia accounting for at least 1.2 million’ (UNHCR 2015d). In United States, around 20 per cent of migrant workers in the caregiving sector are undocumented. Research conducted in Qatar and UAE reveals prevalence of labour exploitation especially on domestic workers.

Women make up 31per cent of 45 crore migrants registered in 2011 census, or 67 per cent of all migrants. Marriage is the primary reason for relocation, despite

the fact that women in India relocate for work. According to census, employment, education, and marriage after childbirth are the main reasons why women migrate. Primary causes of migration or the pressures that have prompted female migration from the time of 1911 to 2011. PLFS 2020–2021 found that women migrated at a rate of 47.9 per cent, 37.2 per cent points more than that of men. Both rural and urban communities experience such drastically different rates of population mobility. In general, there are a lot of environmental and social elements linked to motivations for migration (table.6).

Table 6: Reason for Migration (India's census from 1991 to 2011)

Factors	1991		2001		2011	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employment/work	16.3	1.12	87.7	12.27	84.5	15.47
Education	4.02	0.49	70.83	29.1	60.4	39.5
Marriage	5.85	82.5	1.39	98.6	2.53	97.46
Business	4.84	0.92	84.0	15.5	74.6	25.3
Moved with household	28.0	6.662	42.06	57.9	44.9	55
Others	39.10	8.47	51.68	48.33	53.05	46.9

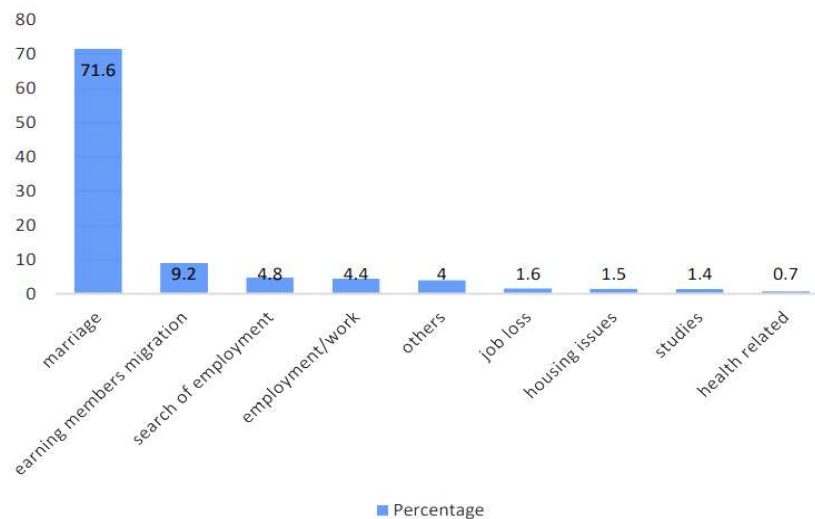
Source: Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

According to 2011 census, primary driving force of female migration is marriage, particularly within same state. Indian census indicates that total population of married women stands at 293 million, suggesting that 70 per cent of these women have migrated to different locations. Among migrants aged 20 to 34, 38.5 per cent of men reported work and employment as their reason for migration, whereas only 2.7 per cent of women cited similar motivations.

As per PLFS Migration Report (2020-21) on distribution of migrants by 'Reason for Migration' says that 7 out of 10 migrants moved due to marriage and Marriage emerged as primary motivation for migration among nearly 71 per cent of individuals surveyed. Specifically, 6.2 per cent of men and a significant 86.8 per cent of women reported that their migration was driven by the desire to marry or fulfill marital obligations notably, marriage-related migration constituted 84.4 per cent of total in rural regions, contrasting with only 47.5 per cent in urban areas. Urban residents exhibited higher migration rates than their rural counterparts. Findings reveal that 69.5 per cent of urban females and 93.8 per cent rural females migrated

primarily for marriage. In terms of job-related migration, per cent of females in urban areas was notably higher (fig-1).

Fig-1 Reason for Female Migration in India



Source: PLFS migration in India report, (2020-21)

Research on well-being of migrants in developed nations frequently indicates that these individuals report lower levels of happiness compared to native populations. Several factors may contribute to this disparity, such as reduced income, diminished social status, lack of recognition for their qualifications, experiences of discrimination, language barriers, family separation, and difficulties inherent in adapting to a new cultural environment (OECD 2015d). Within OECD countries, female migrants are disproportionately affected by unemployment or find themselves in positions that do not match their skills and experience (OECD 2015d). Studies reveal that women migrants across various global regions often face discrimination in labor market, leading many to be relegated to roles in care, domestic work, and informal sector, frequently without any employee rights and protective and security measures (Ghosh, 2009). Prevalence of migrant women workers in part-time, irregular, or informal jobs further impacts their eligibility for social security and pension benefits (OSC, 2009). Notably, even those highly skilled migrant women encounter less favorable labor market outcomes compared to their male counterparts, with gender disparity in employment results being more prominently among migrants than within native people (Arslan et al., 2014).

Migration contributes to an enhancement of women's empowerment, autonomy, and agency; however, their experiences and achievements are still shaped

by prevailing gender dynamism and perpetuating inequalities within their host societies. These dynamics intersect with additional disparities related to age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability, resulting in a multifaceted and often opposing landscape regarding benefits and drawbacks of migration for girls and women. Certain research highlights 'adverse effects on children's emotional and social well-being when one or both parents migrate, particularly emphasizing emotional strain experienced by mothers who leave their children behind' (Orozco et al., 2010). While some studies indicate negative consequences for children following parental migration, others pointed out the positive impacts of remittances, especially concerning educational expenditures. Notably, 'advantages associated with remittances appear to be influenced by gender of recipient; when men send remittances and women receive them, a greater proportion is allocated to children's education and health compared to the reverse scenario' (Lopez-Ekra, 2011). Additionally, 'migrants with elderly parents in their home country face challenge of managing care responsibilities from a distance as their parent's age' (Orozco et al., 2010). 'Older individuals with adult children living abroad reported better physical health, yet they fared less favorably in terms of social and material well-being.' (Vanore and Seigel, 2013).

Government migration-related initiatives

Indian government introduced numerous initiatives or immigration-related policies. Migrants deal with a variety of problems, including difficulties in finding work or a lack of insurance benefits during a difficult time, problems with payment of salaries, and a lack of claims or benefits. Government offers a number of initiatives and programs to solve these issues. To address the effects of Covid- 19 on migrant workers in India, the Indian government created Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan project. It is a rural public works program that was introduced on June 20, 2012, with a 50000-crore rupee for initial financing and was launched in 160 district mission mode to facilitate employment of migrant employees who have returned to their native state. After Covid-19 lockdown, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PM-KSY) was introduced with a cash package worth Rs. 1.7 lakh crore to aid to country's impoverished, destitute, and unorganized sector workers. In order to construct a database of migrant sufferers in each state with mapping, a cell called "State Migrant Cell" is being created. A national database EShram portal was launched to collect data for country's unorganized workers, including migrant labourers. To reimagine labor capital relations and integrate migrant workers into formal workforce, Niti Aayog has been tasked with creating a draft national migration policy, primarily on particular quotas and reservations for monetary transfers. One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) program will be crucial for well-being of migrant workers and play a crucial part in preventing current migration problem

Conclusion

This paper examined reasons and patterns of migration of women, women comprise about half of total migrants. Historically, migration within Indian subcontinent has been relatively minimal; however, recent changes in Indian economy, advancements in education, and enhancements in transportation and communication infrastructure have significantly altered mobility patterns of its populace. Labor shift from agriculture to industrial and service sector activities has further accelerated to this transformation. Additionally, phenomenon of globalization has notably influenced female migration trends, shifting primary motivations for women's migration from social to economic factors. This trend can be linked to several key developments in international migration, including an increase in number of women migrants, emergence of women centric job opportunities, independent migration of women, introduction of women centric legislation, and evolution of gendered perspectives on various societal issues. Collectively, these elements have heightened visibility of women within the migration landscape, leading to what is referred to as 'feminization of migration.' Among Indian women, short-distance migration has been the most common trend. Importance of female migration to economic development is multifaceted and can have significant positive impacts on both source and destination countries. It's important to note that while female migration can bring about positive changes, challenges such as exploitation, discrimination, and social integration issues also need to be addressed to ensure well-being of female migrants and maximizes benefits for both source and destination countries.

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