Internal migration and inclusive development: Insights from the field

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Internal Migration and Inclusive Development: Insights from the Field

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Background

People and size of population have remained an interesting area of enquiry and research in social sciences since time immemorial – oscillating between considering people as a favourable factor for economic growth and viewing them as a drag to the growth process. The Mercantilist view, which dominated economic thought during 16th-18th centuries, considered increase in population as a blessing. According to them higher population meant higher number of soldiers and increase in the number of productive workers. On the other hand, the Physiocrats were suspicious about the advantages of population growth and some of them insisted that shortage of food was a possibility that ought to be taken into account by a nation if population increased continuously. This debate was a subset of the wider debate between looking at people from the Human Capital context and the Human Development context. While the former treats people as active economic agents and inputs to the production process, the latter looks at human being as the benefactor of the process of growth. Now, population of any region can change through natural processes of birth and death, and through movements of population or migration. Over the last three hundred years or so, the natural process has stabilised across the globe. With advances in science and technology, preventive and curative medical facilities have improved tremendously, leading to convergence of death rates. Socioeconomic progress at the macro level and changes in micro-decision making at the household level have led to a fall in birth rates. As a result, migration has emerged as an important factor behind population changes – both temporary and permanent. It has also become a part of worldwide process of urbanisation and industrialisation. It signals social and economic change, and can be regarded as a human adjustment to economic, environmental and social situation.

What is the size of migrant population in the globe and in India? It is reported that more than a billion people in the globe are migrants, and that too by a conservative methodology (UN

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DESA, 2013). Thus one in every seven persons is away from their place of origin or usual residence. Of these, more than three-fourth are internal migrants, i.e. they are footloose but within their own country. The same institution estimates that close to 46 million people in India are migrants – staying at places outside their home state.

However, these estimates depend on how we define *migration* in the first place. Defining migration (especially internal migration) is a controversial issue. At one end of the spectrum, migration is defined as movement of people over some distance (or at least from one "migration-defining area" to another) and from one "usual place of residence" to another. At the other end of the spectrum the definition of migration discards the requirements that migration must involve a change of residence and a move across some distance (Kok, 1999). Standing (1984) suggested that one should rather use a change in "activity space" as a criterion to define migration. However, it is virtually impossible to determine whether there has been a change in "activity space" or not unless research or census questionnaire specifically makes provision for the appropriate information to be obtained. Shryock et al (1976) defined migrants as those persons who are moving relative to labour market areas. The most accepted and widely used approach to define migration is – *a change in usual place of residence and a move from one migration defining area to another*. The estimate earlier mentioned is based on the administrative unit of provinces/regions/states as a migration defining area in the larger countries like China and India. Some of these are larger in area and population than some mid-European countries. If smaller administrative units like districts are used, then the number would jump significantly. Also, people are constantly on the move – migrating and then also coming back to their place of origin – and getting estimate of the stock is quite a difficult task. Considering these issues, India is said to have close to 450 million migrants – taking both intra-state and inter-state migrants together – implying that one-third of India stays outside its place of birth/usual residence [Census of India, 2011; NSSO, 2007-08]. This is more than the population of USA, and close to the population of USA, UK and Germany combined. A large part of them move due to marraige, birth and family movements, but more than a fifth, or about 90 million are temporary economic migrants or footloose workers – a size higher than the entire population of Germany and three times that of Canada. Thus the issue of migration in India is gigantic and necessitates considerable attention from researchers and policy makers.

Review of Literature

To provide a background, Ravenstein (1885) was the foremost proponent who claimed that migration is an economic decision. Neo-classical theorists took this forward and the basic models (Lewis 1954; Ranis & Fei, 1961) portray how modern sector grows through capital accumulation and movement of labour from traditional to modern sector in lure of higher wages. Harris and Todaro (Todaro, 1969; Harris & Todaro, 1970) evolved this further to note that migration occurs in response to *expected* income differentials to account for rural urban migration even in presence of urban unemployment in less developed countries. However, contrary to the neo-classical view, historical experience suggests that migration does not lead to equalisation of wages across space and sector as several factors not only perpetuate the old socio-economic differences between source and destination regions, but new differences are created by the migration process itself, leading to systematic and recurring migration between regions. This is especially true when people with low skill, without economic opportunities at home, travel each year to regions where some work is available in particular seasons (e.g. agricultural workers at harvesting season, brick kiln workers in dry season, etc. See Majumder and Mukherjee, 2012 for a case study). Thus the process of migration, especially within a particular developing country, seems to follow the trail suggested first by Lee (1966) who fragmented the force behind migration into push and pull factors. Push factors like poverty, political instability, unemployment etc pushes potential migrants to move out of a region. On the other hand pull factors like vibrant economy, better job opportunities etc attract migrants to move in. Migration decision is influenced by the factors that are determined at an individual level, household level, community level and regional level and in turn affects those factors. Net Migration to a region is thus determined by the relative strength of both push and pull factors in that region. Thus, as long as such *pull*-s and *push*-es exist, migration would continue. Piore (1979) contradicted this theory and said that migration is not caused by push factors like low wages and high unemployment in the sending countries but by the pull factors in the receiving country. [These and other issues that link migration with development and poverty and the existing literature have been comprehensively discussed by de Haan (2006, 2008)]. Empirical studies, in general, echo the Todaro-Lee-Piore concept that migration is in response to gap between actual economic position in source region and expected situation in destination region. These include Deshinkgar & Grimm (2005) and Banga & Sahu (2010) who discuss internal migration and role of remittances in global perspective across countries and continents. At the national level, studies by Rele (1969), Srivastava and Sasikumar (2003), Srivastava (2005), Rafique, Massey and Rogaly (2006),

Mitra and Murayama (2008), Wouters (2008), Kundu (2009), Roy and Debnath (2011), Taralekar et.al (2012), Naaz & Majumder (2016), Mahapatro (2012), Coffey et.al (2014), Abbas and Verma (2014) all refer to uneven regional development, search for better jobs, diversification of livelihood as main reasons for (male) migration in India. Area or sector specific studies on migration in India include those by Mukherjee (2004), Sundari (2005), Deshingkar and Akhter (2009), Rodgers & Rodgers (2011), Bora (2014) also confirm such a notion. Naaz & Majumder (2017) takes a more nuanced approach and differentiates between two different streams of migrants – one which include people with high levels of human capital moving mostly from urban to urban centres and two, those with low human capital moving in search of low end jobs mainly from rural to urban areas. This supported the views of Kundu and Sarangi (2007) who pointed out that though both poor and rich households migrate, poor households send few members out to create a diversified and external support system for livelihood, while better off households mostly migrate *en masse,* relocating the entire family for enjoying better amenities and status at urban metropole.

A large part of such migrants are females, moving after marriage, or family members moving with rest of the household. The individuals in these cases have no say over the decision to move, but they bear the consequent impacts – both positive and negative. At the same time, the condition of the household and its members across dimensions of assets, physical & human capital, gender & age composition etc. do exert influence on the household's decisions about whether to migrate, when to migrate and who would migrate. Similarly, duration of migration also varies from a few months in a year to long term migrants who migrated two generations back and have settled down in a new place. The reasons, impetus, and also the socioeconomic import of long run migration would differ substantially from short term migration. Surprisingly, while the literature on migration is voluminous, there has not emerged much work that looks at both these type of migrants at a micro context – focussing on the processes and results of short term and long term migration on households. The present paper seeks to address this research gap by using case study from three districts of the state of Bengal in eastern part of India.

Database & Methodology

Since independence, India has maintained a clear agenda towards potent fiscal federalism aimed at balanced state-wise economic progress. Despite this effort, the issue of disparities in regional economic output has persisted over many years (Mathur, 1983, 1987, 1992; Majumder, 2005; Stewart & Moslares, 2014). States, and districts within states, vary in terms

of infrastructure, economic conditions, employment opportunities and aggregate development level. Thus there are considerable *out-migration* from relatively backward districts and *in-migration* into relatively advanced districts. We have selected two backward districts of the state of Bengal - Malda and Puruliya – which has a long history of repetitive, temporary migration, to study the micro condition of such temporary out-migrants. As a contrast we have selected a developed district of the same state – Bardhaman – which also has a long history of attracting migrants from not only surrounding districts but neighbouring states as well into its myriad mines and factories. Those here are mostly long-term migrants from the backward districts of not only Bengal but also of Bihar and Jharkhand, and settled down with their families in urban areas of west Bardhaman. Here, we selected the urban centre of Asansol which is home to a large mass of long term settled migrants. Municipal wards from Asansol (city) and villages from Malda and Puruliya district were selected through purposive sampling to represent locations that had a mix of both migrants and natives/non-migrants. After that Random Sampling was used to select households from the two strata – Migrants and Non-migrants, in proportion to their share in population. In all we surveyed 245 households in Malda, 281 households in Puruliya, and 210 households in Bardhaman district. Of these, 498 were migrant households.

Temporary Migration: Driving Factors

People migrate from the place where push factors outweigh the pull factors and move to a place where pull factors outweigh the push factors. These factors may be of two kinds - Economic and Non-Economic. Movement in search of employment or better income may be termed Economic factors whereas marriage, education, family movement may be designated as Non-Economic factors. At the macro-economic level, it has been observed that Male migration in India is mostly economic whereas female migration is predominantly for non-economic reasons (Naaz & Majumder, 2016). While rural male migrants are observed to be better educated compared to the non-migrants, female migrants in both rural and urban areas have less education compared to the non-migrant females (Naaz & Majumder, 2017). It is also argued that rural-urban temporary migration is age and gender-selective and peaks for the young adult males whose physical productivity is relatively higher than the rest (Esipova et al, 2013; IOM, 2015). There is also a recurring argument that it is the poor asset-less rural people who migrate in search of job (though this has been questioned in recent times by researchers; see Kundu & Sarongi, 2007; Kundu, 2007). Another observation is that people from large families migrate more as there are surplus hands and not enough food at home

(Kothari, 2002; Gurung, 2012). It was also argued that temporary seasonal migrants from rural areas are more likely to be single males rather than married (Singh, 1998). This has been now challenged by recent data which supports the view that men migrate more after marriage when the family responsibility rests upon them and that migration is a family strategy (Gordon, 1981; de Haan, 1997).

We therefore try to examine whether our field data can throw some light on these issues and bring out the correlates of the process of temporary migration from rural areas.

For that purpose we have used a Binary Logistic Regression Function where the Dependent Variable is Whether an Individual is Temporary Migrant or Not (=1 if migrant, =0 otherwise). The causal variables identified for our study are Age, Gender, Education represented by Completed years of formal schooling, Marital status, Social Class, Family Size, and Land owned (in Kathas) as a proxy of asset. We also include Age squared and Land-owned squared to account for non-linearity of impact of these two variables.

Given the above discussion, status (Y_{ij}) of the i^{th} member of the j^{th} household may be either of the two – Temporary Migrant ($Y_{ij} = 1$); or, Non-migrant ($Y_{ij} = 0$). This status would depend on the Household-specific characteristics (X) and individual-specific characteristics (Z).

$$P[Y_{ij} = 1 \mid X_j, Z_i] = \frac{e^{\alpha + \beta X_j + \pi Z_i}}{1 + e^{\alpha_j + \beta X_j + \pi Z_i}}; \qquad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (1)$$

Or the Log Odds Ratio would be given by:

$$LOR_{ij} = \alpha + \beta X_j + \pi Z_i ; \qquad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (2)$$

Where, X and Z are vectors of variables as mentioned earlier. Estimated coefficients β and π provide us the impact of explanatory variables on the Log-Odds Ratio of being a Temporary Migrant vis-a-vis being a non-migrant. The impacts of changes in the explanatory variables on the probability are obtained as marginal effects or e^{β} and e^{π}. To exclude child-migration who migrate mostly with their family and are not decision-makers, we include only those who are 14+ years of age in our study. Descriptives of the sample data are reproduced in Table 1. The regression results are discussed below.

Table 1

Determinants of Migration – Sample Descriptives

Characteristics / Variables	***Pooled***			***Malda***			***Purulia***		
	Mean	***Low***	***High***	***Mean***	***Low***	***High***	***Mean***	***Low***	***High***
% Migrant	20.1			23.0			17.2		
Age (years)	35	15	90	30	15	85	36	15	90
Years of Schooling	4	0	21	6	0	21	4	0	15
Family Size	5	1	10	5	2	9	5	1	10
Land possessed (in *kathas*)	35	0	200	21	0	200	45	0	180
% Males	52.8			54.4			51.5		
% Married	72.0			68.9			74.7		
% Hindu ST	43.9			17.7			66.7		
% Hindu SC	24.0			34.3			15.0		
% Muslims	12.4			26.7			-		
Number of Observations	***1779***			***827***			***952***		

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Table 2

Determinants of Migration – Logit Regression (14+ population)

Dependent Variable:	***Whether Temporary Migrant (or not)***					
Causal Variables	***Pooled***		***Malda***		***Purulia***	
	Beta	***Marginal Impact***	***Beta***	***Marginal Impact***	***Beta***	***Marginal Impact***
Age (years)	0.053** (0.07)	1.05	0.066 (0.14)	1.07	0.047 (0.25)	1.05
Age squared	-0.01** (0.02)	1.00	-0.001** (0.04)	1.00	-0.001* (0.13)	1.00
Years of Schooling	0.014 (0.31)	1.01	-0.009 (0.68)	0.99	0.022 (0.35)	1.02
Gender Dummy Males; (control group: females)	3.045** (0.01)	21.02	3.814** (0.01)	45.35	2.500** (0.01)	12.18
Marital Status Dummy (Married) (control group: unmarried)	1.124** (0.01)	3.08	1.329** (0.01)	3.78	-0.130** (0.03)	0.88
Family Size	-0.162** (0.01)	0.85	-0.187** (0.01)	0.83	1.023** (0.01)	2.78
Land possessed (in *kathas*)	-0.008* (0.12)	0.99	-0.002 (0.85)	0.99	-0.010* (0.16)	0.99
Land possessed squared	-	-	-0.001 (0.21)	0.97	0.001 (0.97)	1.00
Social Group Dummy (Hindu ST) (control group: Hindu Gen)	0.218* (0.20)	1.24	-	-	0.592** (0.04)	1.81
Social Group Dummy (Hindu SC) (control group: Hindu Gen)	-0.013 (0.91)	0.99	-0.185 (0.50)	0.83	0.183 (0.61)	1.20
Social Group Dummy (Muslim) (control group: Hindu Gen)	0.169 (0.49)	1.18	0.154 (0.60)	1.28	-	-
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.339		0.424		0.268	
Log-likelihood ratio	1346 **		620.2**		707.8**	
Correct classification (%)	82.9		81.5		83.4	
Number of Observations	1779		827		952	

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Note: * and ** denote significance at 20% and 10% levels respectively. Figures in parenthesis are p-values

Pooled Regression – All

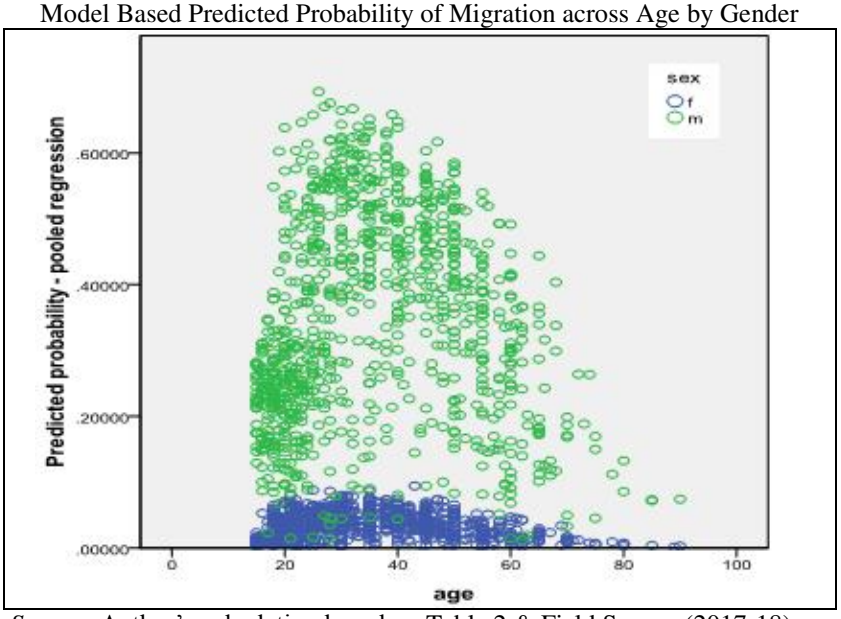
From results shown in Table 2, we observe that Seasonal / Temporary Out-migration from the two selected districts of Bengal are indeed age and gender specific. Probability of migration increases with age initially but comes down eventually as shown by positive coefficient of Age and negative coefficient of Age-squared. Males are twenty times more likely to migrate than females. Marital status is also significant and we find evidence that rather than single males, it is married males who migrate more. They are three times more likely to migrate than unmarried males. Family size is an important determinant too, but contrary to popular hypothesis, members of large families are less likely to migrate as shown by the significantly negative coefficient. Migration is also driven by asset poverty as probability of migration decreases as quantity of land possessed increases. Probability of Migration is significantly higher for Hindu STs and Muslims compared to Hindu Others (or Hindu Upper castes). Education as indicated by completed years of formal education seems to increase probability of migration, though the impact is statistically insignificant.

These results are also brought out by Figures 1 & 2 which shows a hump in probability of migration around age 25-45, a secular decline in migration probability as land size increases, and the higher migration propensity of males.

Split regression – All

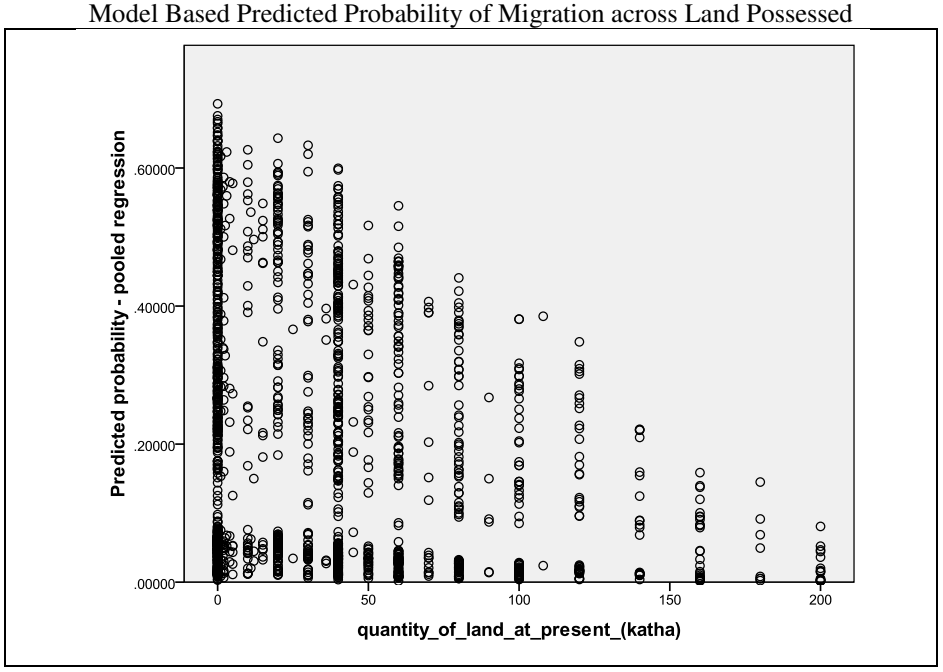
If we segregate across the two districts, the results provide interesting insights into the heterogeneity of migration process. While the results remain almost identical for age, gender, and land possessed; for the rest the two districts provide a contrasting picture. In Malda, education seems to *decrease* the probability of migration. In Puruliya, being married *decreases* the probability of migration and larger family size *increases* such probability. Also, the social class effects are now more pronounced with STs in Puruliya and Muslims in Malda showing remarkably higher propensity to migrate compared to the reference category. The gender division is also more stark in Malda with males almost fifty times more likely to migrate than females while in Puruliya males are twelve times more likely to migrate than females. Thus in Puruliya it is the single educated male from larger tribal families who are more prone to migrate compared to Malda where married males with less education from smaller Muslim families that are more probable to migrate. This contrasting picture underlines the diversity in the process of migration decision making as well as the profile of migrants across space and social dimensions.

Figure: 1
Model Based Predicted Probability of Migration across Age by Gender



Source: Author's calculation based on Table 2 & Field Survey (2017-18)

Figure: 2
Model Based Predicted Probability of Migration across Land Possessed



Source: Author's calculation based on Table 2 & Field Survey (2017-18)

Pooled Regression – Males

It is a reality that temporary/seasonal internal migration in India is dominated by males. Our survey results discussed above also support this fact as males are significantly more likely to migrate than females. Hence we decided to focus more on the male population and explore whether results discussed above holds true when only males are considered. It is observed from Table 3 that the impacts are almost similar. Age still has a positive but non-linear impact on probability of migration. Married men are about four times more likely to migrate than unmarried men. Higher amount of land possessed brings down propensity to migrate.

STs and Muslims are more likely to migrate than the reference category of Hindu upper caste men. The only difference now is that education now has a negative coefficient, indicating that men with relatively less years of formal education are more probable to migrate.

Table 3

Determinants of Male Migration – Logit Regression (14+ Males)

Dependent Variable:	***Whether Temporary Migrant (or not)***					
Causal Variables	***Pooled***		***Malda***		***Purulia***	
	Beta	***Marginal Impact***	***Beta***	***Marginal Impact***	***Beta***	***Marginal Impact***
Age (years)	0.039 (0.23)	1.04	0.065* (0.16)	1.07	0.001 (0.99)	1.00
Age squared	-0.001** (0.04)	1.00	-0.001** (0.05)	1.00	0.001 (0.48)	1.00
Years of Schooling	-0.003 (0.88)	0.99	-0.008 (0.73)	0.99	-0.013 (0.63)	0.99
Marital Status Dummy (Married) (control group: unmarried)	1.350** (0.01)	3.86	1.401** (0.01)	4.06	1.412** (0.01)	4.11
Family Size	-0.185** (0.01)	0.83	-0.198** (0.01)	0.82	-0.156** (0.02)	0.86
Land possessed (in *kathas*)	-0.007* (0.17)	0.99	-0.002 (0.80)	0.99	-0.006 (0.45)	0.99
Land possessed squared	0.001 (0.60)	1.00	0.001 (0.21)	1.00	0.000 (0.80)	1.00
Social Group Dummy (Hindu ST) (control group: Hindu Gen)	0.101 (0.63)	1.11	-	-	0.348 (0.26)	1.42
Social Group Dummy (Hindu SC) (control group: Hindu Gen)	-0.029 (0.90)	0.97	-0.084 (0.77)	0.92	-0.179 (0.65)	0.84
Social Group Dummy (Muslim) (control group: Hindu Gen)	0.024 (0.93)	1.02	0.314 (0.31)	1.35	-	-
Nagelkerke R-squared	*0.166*		*0.200*		*0.142*	
Log-likelihood ratio	*1091.2**		*534.3**		*541.9**	
Correct classification (%)	*70.1*		*68.9*		*72.7*	
Number of Observations	*940*		*450*		*490*	

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Note: * and ** denote significance at 20% and 10% levels respectively. Figures in parenthesis are p-values

Split Regression – Males

When we segregate across districts, we find that there are some subtle differences. The age-selection process is more pronounced in Malda than in Puruliya. Also, as before, the selection across social classes follows the demographic pattern of the two districts – STs in Puruliya and Muslims in Malda are more prone to migration.

Summary

It therefore emerges from our survey results that temporary seasonal migration is mostly a distress phenomenon. People without adequate (farm) land in rural areas, mostly married males, with little formal education and belonging to the socially disadvantaged groups (STs and Muslims) are more likely to migrate. We can calculate predicted probability of the average person as also several counterfactuals for the pooled data as well as the district level data (Table 4).

Table 4
Expected Probability of Migration – Average & Contrasts

Characteristics / Variables	*Pooled*		*Malda*		*Purulia*	
	Sample Average	***Contrast***	***Sample Average***	***Contrast***	***Sample Average***	***Contrast***
Age (years)	35	30	30	30	36	30
Years of Schooling	4	0	6	0	4	0
Family Size	5	4	5	4	5	4
Land possessed (in *kathas*)	35	0	21	0	45	0
Is Male	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Is Married	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Is Hindu ST / Muslim	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Predicted Probability of Migration	**0.19**	**0.62**	**0.30**	**0.70**	**0.12**	**0.60**

Source: Author's calculation based on Tables 1, 2 and Field Survey (2017-18)

The average unmarried male from Hindu upper caste household is 35 years of age, has just 4 years of formal schooling and comes from a household of 5 members with 35 *kathas* of land. For this person, predicted probability of migration is just 19 per cent. As a contrast, if we consider the median person who is married, 30 years of age, from a ST or Muslim landless family of 4 persons, without any formal schooling, the predicted probability multiplies three times to become 62 per cent.

Looking at the district level data separately, the average person in Malda is younger, with more formal schooling and less amount of land under possession. For this person the predicted probability of migration stands at around 30 per cent. Predicted probability of migration for the contrasting person in this district with characteristic variables as mentioned before is more than double at 70 per cent.

For Puruliya, the average person is older, of 36 years of age, with just 4 years of formal schooling, comes from a household of 5 persons with 45 *kathas* of land in possession. The average person has substantially lower predicted probability of migration (than Malda) – just about 12 per cent. The contrasting person in this case is five times more likely to migrate than the average person, with predicted probability of migration at 60 per cent.

Our results therefore support the opinion that migration decisions depend on individual as well as household factors, especially in developing countries, where temporary and seasonal migration is a strategy to diversify sources of income and improve total income through remittances [similar to views expressed by Stark and Bloom, 1985; Yang, 2008; Antman,

2012]. Whether such a strategy bears fruit at the ground level is a matter of enquiry which we attempt in the next section.

Impact of Migration on Participating Households

We have already inferred that temporary migration is a risk-minimising poverty-mitigating strategy of rural households from disadvantaged social background. But does migration act as an inclusive process where the migrant families improve their economic condition? There are several such questions that beg answer. What is the educational, employment and occupational condition of the migrant households? Do migrant households enjoy better income/consumption levels compared to non-migrants? Are their activity and occupational structure better? Do they have better housing, amenities, and enjoy financial inclusion? These issues have been explored in this section.

As mentioned earlier, we compare households that send members as temporary/seasonal migrants and those that do not send out migrants. Also, to examine whether there is a difference between long term permanent/semi-permanent migration and seasonal migration in terms of socioeconomic outcome of migration, we use a control group of settled migrants from Bardhaman district of Bengal. The results are discussed below.

Table: 5
Human Capital Position – Education of the 18+ Sample Household Members

		Education Distribution					
	Status	***Illiterate***	***Below Primary***	***Primary passed***	***Middle passed***	***School passed***	***Graduate+***
Puruliya	**Temp Migrants**	41.6	20.8	11.6	12.3	12.0	1.6
	Non-migrants	41.8	18.0	13.5	12.0	12.7	1.9
Maldah	**Temp Migrants**	23.7	22.2	19.6	15.6	16.4	2.5
	Non-migrants	27.0	18.3	12.4	16.6	18.7	7.1
Bardhaman	**Settled Migrants**	7.5	20.7	12.8	33.1	9.9	16.0
	Non-migrants	9.7	15.8	14.7	40.5	7.3	12.0

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Human Capital Position

We have looked at the human capital position of the 18+ population of our sample. We compare between Seasonal Migrants (from Puruliya and Malda districts), Settled Migrants (in Bardhaman district) and Non-migrants. It is observed that human capital situation in both Puruliya and Malda districts are inadequate with Temporary Migrant households having relatively poorer human capital situation than the Non-migrant households of the same district (Table 5). They have more illiterates and below primary school educated persons and lesser share of graduates and high school pass-outs. The settled migrants in Bardhaman on the other hand have a human capital position that is close to the natives of the district,

indicating that after settling down they have been able to improve their educational attainment substantially.

Participation in Labour Market

Since temporary migration is a strategy to get meaningful employment and raise income level, it is no surprise that LFPR and WPR are higher among temporary migrants in both Malda and Puruliya compared to the non-migrant households (Table 6). However, settled migrants in Bardhaman have a lower LFPR and WPR not only from the temporary migrants of these two districts but also from the natives. Migrant households in Puruliya had the highest LFPR and WPR – perhaps reflecting the overall economic stagnancy of the region. Unemployment is highest among non-migrants in Puruliya and lowest among migrants in Malda, which is expected as the raison-d'être of migration is getting jobs.

Table: 6
Labour Market Statistics

District	*Status*	*Too Young / Too Old*	*School going*	*Domestic duties*	*Out of Labour force*	*LFPR*	*Unem ployed*	*WPR*
Puruliya	**Temp Migrants**	3.4	21.6	14.1	39.1	60.9	4.2	56.7
	Non-migrants	2.6	23.3	22.1	48.0	52.0	8.2	43.8
Maldah	**Temp Migrants**	3.3	36.0	15.9	55.2	44.8	2.9	41.9
	Non-migrants	13.6	35.8	13.1	62.5	37.5	4.0	33.5
Bardhaman	**Settled Migrants**	13.6	24.9	18.9	57.4	42.6	3.9	38.7
	Non-migrants	12.4	27.0	22.2	63.6	36.4	3.9	34.5

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Table: 7
Proportion of Workers in Different Types of Employment / Activity Status

District	*Status*	*Self Employment*	*Casual Employment*	*Regular / Salaried Employment*
Puruliya	**Temp Migrants**	0.5	98.8	0.7
	Non-migrants	3.0	85.8	11.2
Maldah	**Temp Migrants**	0.2	99.5	0.2
	Non-migrants	3.0	92.2	4.8
Bardhaman	**Settled Migrants**	35.4	35.9	28.7
	Non-migrants	22.0	40.0	38.0

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Work Activity Status

It is true that the poor can ill-afford to remain unemployed. Hence LFPR & WPR are generally perverse indicators of economic vibrancy of a region/group and it is better to look at the type of work/activity to understand the real condition of the workers. We have segregated workers into three broad types. In order of hierarchy and economic benefits, they are Regular Salaried Employment, Casual Employment, and Self-employment. It is observed that almost the entire employment among Temporary migrants comes from Casual Work, indicating the precarious nature of the working condition for them (Table 7). Only a handful

of non-migrants in Malda and Puruliya are in Regular Salaried job. In contrast, settled migrants in Bardhaman have a more equitable spread over the three types of employment, though here too casual work is marginally dominating. The highest share of regular/salaried job is found among non-migrants in Bardhaman district, indicating that this group is perhaps in the best economic condition.

Occupational Distribution

Another major indicator of labour market conditions is the occupational distribution of workers. It is observed that seasonal migrants are predominantly into Construction work and Unspecified manual work in both Puruliya and Malda (Table 8). The non-migrants in these two districts, as expected, are mostly in the farming occupation as cultivators and agricultural labourers. Presence of migrant workers in clerical and managerial jobs is negligible. This indicates that the migrants are mostly engaged in lower rung of occupations. The settled migrants in Bardhaman, in contrast, are more in Sales and Clerical & Managerial jobs – occupation that are less exerting and more paying.

Table: 8
Occupational Distribution of Workers

Activity	**Puruliya**			**Malda**			**Bardhaman**		
	Migrant	***Non-migrant***	***All***	***Migrant***	***Non-migrant***	***ALL***	***Migrant***	***Non-migrant***	***ALL***
Cultivator	21.5	38.1	26.8	45.6	35.9	41.3	1.0	0.1	1.0
Agricultural Labourer	12.3	13.8	12.8	6.6	10.2	7.4	0.5	0.2	0.3
Industrial Labourer	7.4	7.4	7.4	2.3	1.7	2.2	9.2	6.0	8.0
Construction Labourer	2.0	4.2	2.7	31.4	20.0	31.1	1.3	1.6	1.4
Unspecified Manual Labourer	49.3	11.6	25.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	27.0	45.0	31.6
Handicrafts	2.5	1.1	2.0	2.3	3.4	2.5	16.0	7.0	14.0
Clerical & Managerial	0.3	4.2	1.7	0.0	1.7	0.4	15.0	12.0	15.0
Sales & Others	4.7	19.6	21.6	11.7	27.1	15.1	30.0	28.1	28.7

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Table: 9
Conditions of Housing and Amenities

District	*Status*	*Pucca Houses*	*Pucca Toilet*	*Safe Drinking Water*	*Clean Cooking Fuel*	*Electricity*
Puruliya	**Temp Migrants**	22.7	6.8	84.6	9.9	73.0
	Non-migrants	12.7	10.2	85.6	21.2	57.6
Maldah	**Temp Migrants**	41.2	20.9	73.3	28.9	73.3
	Non-migrants	62.1	29.3	81.0	29.3	77.6
Bardhaman	**Settled Migrants**	58.3	77.0	93.1	90.5	100.0
	Non-migrants	65.4	62.1	89.7	90.3	96.6

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Housing & Amenities

The living condition is best reflected in the condition of housing/dwelling and amenities therein. It is observed that in Malda, migrant households have relatively poor housing condition compared to the non-migrants (Table 9). In Puruliya, migrant households have better houses and electricity but not sanitation or clean cooking fuel. In Bardhaman however, the settled migrants enjoy better housing conditions, though they have relatively less share of pucca houses.

Consumption, Poverty & Inequality

In India, economic condition and living standard of people are usually measured by their consumption levels. Though fraught with measurement errors, recall bias and myriad other methodological issues, MPCE (Monthly Per-capita Consumption Expenditure) is still considered as benchmark in determining the economic status of a household. We have attempted at collecting information on consumption expenses and constructed the MPCE figures. It is observed that average MPCE of surveyed households is lowest in Puruliya and highest in Bardhaman – in line with the general economic condition of the three districts as exhibited by secondary data too (Table 10).[1] If we compare across migrants and non-migrants, we find that the seasonal migrant households in Malda and Puruliya have marginally lower average MPCE than the non-migrant families. Since in the earlier section we noted that the migrants mostly come from asset-less poor families, the results here indicate that migration did help them to come up to an economic level closer to the non-migrants. In Bardhaman however, the settled migrants have average MPCE that is marginally higher than the natives, indicating that permanent migration is more effective as a coping strategy than temporary migration.

Table: 10
Household Consumption Expenditure (₹ per capita per month at current prices 2016-17)

District	*Status*	*Mean MPCE*	*Median MPCE*	*% below State Poverty Line*
Puruliya	**Temp Migrants**	791	570	44.5
	Non-migrants	813	825	74.5
Maldah	**Temp Migrants**	1527	1218	35.2
	Non-migrants	1559	1272	35.5
Bardhaman	**Settled Migrants**	2580	2030	23.2
	Non-migrants	2521	1742	26.0

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

We also tried to measure incidence of Head Count Poverty across districts and family types on the basis of computed MPCE levels. For this we have used the State-specific poverty line

[1] Bardhaman ranks fourth among the districts of Bengal in terms of Per capita DDP, Puruliya ranks second from bottom whereas Malda ranks fourth from bottom (GoWB, 2015)

provided by NITI Ayog/Planning Commission for West Bengal (GoI, 2014). For the year 2011-12, this was ₹ 783 for rural areas and ₹ 981 for urban areas. We updated this to 2016-17 figures using the CPIAL for rural areas and CPIIW for urban areas. It is observed that, as expected, HCR is highest among the surveyed households in Puruliya, followed by Malda, and least in Bardhaman (Table 10). What is more interesting is that while incidence of consumption poverty is almost similar across migrant and non-migrant families in Malda, in Puruliya households with migrant members have remarkably lower incidence of consumption poverty compared with non-migrant families. In Bardhaman too, settled migrants show lower HCR compared to the natives. Thus, in Puruliya, migration as a poverty alleviation strategy of the households is remarkably successful. This is also true, but with a lesser degree, for the migrant families settling in Bardhaman.

We have also tried to examine the relative inequality in consumption levels across households. For this we have pooled the sample households together and divided them into 5 quintiles based on their MPCE levels, separately for each of the three districts. Q5 is the highest MPCE bracket and Q1 is the lowest one. Thereafter we have examined what proportion of each household-type in each district are in the 5 quintile groups. It is observed that the migrant households are more equally spread across the 5 quintile groups while the non-migrant households are more polarised near the two ends (Table 11). Thus inequality seems to be lower *within* migrant households compared to *within* non-migrant households in all the three districts. This is clearer when we look at Figure 3 which shows that the distribution across MPCE classes are uni-polar for the migrant households and bi-polar for the non-migrant households.

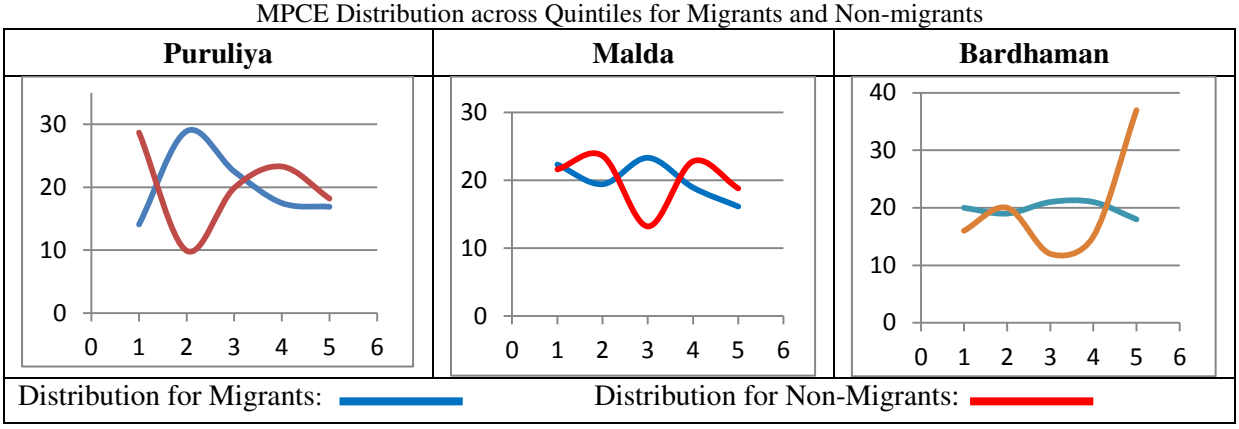
Table: 11
Distribution of persons across MPCE Quintiles for Migrants and Non-migrants

	Status	***Q1***	***Q2***	***Q3***	***Q4***	***Q5***
Puruliya	**Migrants**	14.1	28.9	22.5	17.5	16.9
	Non-migrants	28.7	9.9	19.9	23.3	18.2
Maldah	**Migrants**	22.3	19.4	23.3	18.9	16.1
	Non-migrants	21.6	23.6	13.2	22.8	18.8
Bardhaman	**Migrants**	20.0	19.0	21.0	21.0	18.0
	Non-migrants	16.0	20.0	12.0	15.0	37.0

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

It therefore appears that migration indeed acts as a way out of poverty for rural households. They have improved consumption levels, lower incidence of Headcount poverty and lower within group inequality. In this, migration seems to be working as an inclusive process, with permanent migration reaping better dividends than seasonal migration.

Figure: 3
MPCE Distribution across Quintiles for Migrants and Non-migrants



Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Financial Inclusion

Another way to look at the impact of migration is to examine the aspect of financial inclusion. In recent years there has been an emphasis in policy as well as implementation level towards financial inclusion – make banking and institutional credit services accessible to all. What is the situation among the surveyed households in this dimension was explored. It appears that making people come to the bank and have bank account has been successful in Bardhaman and Puruliya where most of the households have bank accounts (Table 12). However, this has not been that much successful in Malda. Also, Bank accounts are more frequent among migrant households than non-migrants in the two districts mentioned – perhaps because of the remittance factor as sending and receiving money is facilitated when the family has bank account. In Malda, fewer migrant households have bank accounts compared to non-migrants – perhaps because the monetary transactions there are more through personal channel rather than institutional.

Table: 12
Penetration of Financial Instruments

	Puruliya			**Malda**			**Bardhaman**		
Activity	***Migrant***	***Non-migrant***	***All***	***Migrant***	***Non-migrant***	***ALL***	***Migrant***	***Non-migrant***	***ALL***
% with Bank Account	82.2	78.0	80.4	9.6	13.8	10.6	94.6	91.7	93.7
% indebted	45.4	34.7	40.9	41.2	48.3	42.9	22.5	25.0	23.3
% loan from Institutions	4.3	2.5	3.6	10.7	10.3	10.6	19.4	13.3	17.6

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Indebtedness is also higher in Malda compared to Puruliya and Bardhaman. Indebtedness is higher among non-migrants in these two districts while in Malda, indebtedness is more frequent among migrant households. What is alarming is the fact that only a fraction of such loans are from institutional sources, especially in Puruliya where it is almost negligible.

However, the brighter side is that institutional credit is marginally more frequent among migrant households than non-migrants in all the three districts.

Summary

It therefore emerges from our study that success of migration as a coping and poverty alleviation strategy is somewhat mixed. While they do seem to enjoy higher consumption levels, lower poverty and within-group inequality, the nature of employment and earning is questionable. Most of them are in unskilled manual jobs outside the state and the jobs are casual in nature. Housing and amenities are not remarkably better and indebtedness is high, especially in Malda. Also, the situation of the settled migrants are somewhat better than the seasonal/temporary migrants. This brings us to the final section on the process of migration and associated threats and pitfalls.

Migration Process and the Human Angle

What we have discussed so far are revealing the macroeconomic processes no doubt but at the same time it misses one important aspect – the story of the human beings in flesh and blood, people with hunger and poverty no doubt, but also people with emotions, passions, families, culture and attachments. In this section let us tell the tale of human beings – migrants as we know them – interspersed with some hard facts to bring out the nuances of the micro-process of migration and the associated pitfalls and risks.

The migrant workers move in search of a better income and livelihood but pay a high cost to do so. There are increasing instances of social-politics of identity being aroused across the country and migrant workers are treated as aliens and root of all problems in overcrowded cities; cities that do not spare a single square-foot of space for dignified living of the immigrant but is unsparing in criticising the workers' shanties as an eye sore and ghettos; cities where the mob descends on anyone not conforming to the *local* concept of righteousness.[1] Lacking proper documentation and faced with political exclusion (migrants are not registered voters in their destination region and in their source areas they are absentees during election), they are a non-existent constituency and lack a lobbying voice to ensure their basic rights.[2] They are also soft targets of local and organised crime and very often fall victim to human trafficking. These are the threats faced by temporary migrants of

[1] Lynching and mob fury against migrant workers are common; see The Deccan Chronicle, Jan 17, 2018.

[2] The Times of India counts lost votes at 281 million in 2014 general elections. A large part of that is due to workers on the move. See The Times of India, Calcutta, January 30, 2019 and February 16, 2019 on this. Also, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/gurgaon/voters-who-dont-have-a-vote/articleshow/68025936.cmsu

India on a regular basis. In addition, the process of migration itself gives rise to further risks and heartbreaks.

Table 13
Channels of Migration – Percentage Shares

Channel	**Puruliya**	**Maldah**	**Bardhaman**
Family /Relatives	23.8	41.9	60.9
Friends	36.2	-	18.2
Middlemen/Labour Contractors	40.0	58.1	20.9
	100	100	100

Source: Author's calculation based on Field Survey (2017-18)

Most of the process of migration is based on social networks – of family relatives, friends or the neighbourhood *uncle* who also doubles as labour contractor or middlemen/agent. Our survey results also come up with the same pattern – seasonal or temporary migration is facilitated mostly by labour contractors (especially in Malda) while long term settled migration is facilitated more by family members or relatives (Table 13). The dominating pattern of out-migration through labour contractors is through an age-old process known as *Dadon*. Originally it used to mean loan taken from local money lender (who most often was also the local *Zamindar*) as advance payment for the purpose of agricultural activities before the agricultural season. The repayment was through unpaid labour at the farm of the *zamindar*. With land settlement during colonial rule the process had withered. That pre-colonial practice has returned (or may have remained dormant all this time), and now the local labour-contractor provides loan to poor rural households at the start of the agricultural season. The debtors repay the amount by going away to mostly construction sites during the lean agricultural season and working there – their wages chalking up the repayment back home. They end up at faraway places – some 1500-2000 kilometres away from home, changing trains at least twice, travelling by the *general class coaches* of Indian Railways. They are mostly ill-educated, asset-less, with no vocational or skill training. They are like *Qurban*, whose story we learned at Halna village of Malda.[1]

In *Qurban*'s village, *Rintu* is the main contractor and out of 700 households in the village, at least 300 are in his payroll, working outside the state. *Qurban* had taken a loan of ₹ 60,000 for his ailing father from the local labour contractor. This would be repaid by working 300 days at a construction site near Hitec city, Hyderabad. On a cold January Sunday, when the

[1] Names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

district was freezing, the contractors men collected 30 such men and put them on train. All of them had taken advances from *Rintu*. The running wage receivable by the workers for construction work in Telangana, Karnataka, and Kerala is ₹ 200 per day for a 10-12 hour job. There are no leaves or other allowances. The labour contractor arranges for food and accommodation, and deducts ₹ 45 each day for that. All medical expenses are deducted from wages receivable. Incidentally, the actual wages in these states at construction sites is not less than ₹ 450 per day, leaving a handsome profit for the contractor. You can call it exploitation if you like but that does not change the ground reality. Men like *Qurban* spend on an average 8-10 months on site, returning home for 2-3 months in a year. Once work gets over at a given site, the contractor shifts them to a new site in a new state perhaps. They earn about ₹ 60,000 for this or ₹ 5000 per month when averaged over the year. This amount is an attractive one when compared to Malda's current per capita DDP of ₹ 4245 per month and average MPCE of ₹ 1550 for our sample households in the district. Thus there is no lack of able-bodied males willing to go out and *Rintu* always has a que outside his shanty office in the local *haat-tola*. The lure of this road out of squalor and poverty is so strong that peculiar transformations are taking place at the country-side, unknown and un-recorded by the intelligentsia like us. Average years of education among boys is coming down as school drop-out is going up in lure of assured money income from such migratory work. With a stagnant local economy, there is no incentive to continue general education and wait for local earning opportunities to materialise. However, frequency and duration of girls going to formal schools is improving as family income reaches stability through such assured income. On another front, there are now increasing incidents of alcoholism, substance-abuse and spread of infectious diseases like HIV as trans-state movement have increased and more & more unsupervised adolescents are going out to work. Absence of male member in the household for a major part of the year creates insecurity among the women and infirm who stay back – there are increasing instances of land-grabbing, diversion of rightful benefits and a general rise of the henchmen. But *Qurban* was unmindful of all such dangers. He was dreaming of his daughter's marriage.

And then all dreams come to an end, often with a loud crash. The building on which he was working collapsed due to poor material being used and *Qurban* was one of the two workers who died under the rubble.[1] After much bargaining the construction company agreed to pay ₹ 2 lakh as compensation. By that time, *Qurban*'s father had expired and his wife did not have a bank account in her name. A facilitator took ₹ 20 thousand for arranging things and his

[1] The Hindu, Hyderabad, July 24, 2016

dead-body finally arrived in his village after 10 days in an ambulance for the last rites. And he is not alone in such tales of broken dreams. One of his friends was even less fortunate. He died in a road mishap in Raipur. Since the death took place outside working hours and off-site, the company did not spare even a rupee. Cost of bringing the body home was ₹ 70 thousand, which conventionally the labour contractor pays. The family agreed to perform the last rites in Raipur and *Rintu* paid for the travel. He handed over ₹ 60k saved this way to the family who clutched at it as a last straw to tide over the next few months of hunger staring at the face. Last heard, *Qurban*'s 15 year old son left school and joined the growing river of migrant workers moving across the country. Such is the life of a temporary migrant in India!

Not a conclusion by any name

We have nothing further to add – no grandstanding policy suggestion or cleverly thought impromptu out-of-the-box solutions to such problems of human tragedy. Our only submission to the readers would be to recognise these problems, to pay adequate attention to these issues, to debate and discuss at all levels so that the complexities and human stories behind a country on the move are brought on the table. It is too mammoth an issue and affects too many human lives to shove it under the carpet, especially when it is migrant workers who lose their lives in carpet factories![1]

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