

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Socio-economic analysis of the migrant labourers in Punjab: An empirical analysis**

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**Labour migration is a complex phenomenon and encompasses different streams which vary in duration, nature of origin and destination areas and characteristics of migration process. Based on the primary and secondary data, this paper analyses the socio-economic conditions of migrant labourers in Patiala city; studies the nature, size, type and other characteristics of migrant labourers; analyses to what extent migration has contributed towards the improvement in the economic conditions of migrant labourers and their families; examines the effects of migration on the general improvement of the economic conditions in those areas supporting migration; outlines the difficulties and problems faced by migrant workers during migration; and finally reviews the various legal and legislative enactments of central and state governments to safeguard the interests of migrant labourers. Resourcelessness, unemployment and poverty are the main factors responsible for the migration of the poor labourers and these labourers have a tendency to migrate in their young age. A sizeable proportion of male migrants goes alone 1st and leaves their wives behind in the village. Many of these migrants send remittances to their families, visit frequently, and return to their villages to retire. Migration is shown to have contributed significantly to the improved economic situation of the migrants and their families.**

**Key words:** Government, migrant labourers, poverty, unemployment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Movement of living beings in search of better environments is a natural phenomenon and man is no exception to it. Migration of human beings is a complex phenomenon. In the present era of globalization and liberalization, the study of migration has become one of the most dynamic aspects of human beings. The World Development Report 1999/2000 estimates that more than 130 million people now live outside the countries of their birth (Sasikumar, 1995).

India as a nation has seen a high migration rate in recent years. Over 98 million people migrated from one place to another in 1990's, the highest for any decade since independence (GOI, 2001). While freedom to migrate within the country is an enshrined right, the uneven development, levels of desperation and other

factors have created friction points. Most people migrate because of a combination of push and pull factors. Lack of rural employment, fragmentation of land holdings and declining public investment in agriculture create a crisis for rural Indians. Urban areas and some rural areas with industrial development or high agricultural production offer better prospects for jobs or self-employment (Azad India Foundation, 2009).

The studies by Trovato (2003), Massey (2003) and Ellerman (2005) examine the patterns and processes of international migration. These studies state that people migrate from less developed countries to more developed countries because the development of the other countries acts as an attractive force.

## **PUNJAB'S SCENARIO**

Punjab has historically been associated with tremendous

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**Table 1.** Trends of migration in Punjab: 1981 - 2001.

State/Year	1981	1991	2001	Growth rate ( percent, per annum )		
				1981 - 91	1991 - 01	1981 - 01
				Bihar	50235 (06.43)	90732 (09.20)
Haryana	248043 (31.74)	298192 (30.41)	361766 (23.02)	1.85	1.95	1.90
Himachal Pradesh	112289 (14.37)	136134 (13.80)	165158 (10.51)	1.94	1.95	1.94
Rajasthan	91879 (11.76)	110853 (11.24)	136168 (08.66)	1.90	2.08	1.99
Uttar Pradesh	220216 (28.18)	280350 (28.42)	517351 (32.92)	2.44	6.32	4.36
Madhya Pradesh	15556 (01.99)	15717 (1.58)	30559 (01.95)	0.10	6.87	3.43
West-Bengal	12970 (01.66)	18635 (01.89)	45902 (02.92)	3.69	9.43	6.52
Jammu and Kashmir	30223 (03.87)	36108 (03.66)	47349 (03.01)	1.80	2.75	2.27
Total of 8 states	781411 (95.02)	986621 (87.61)	1571662 (89.67)	2.36	4.77	3.56
Total	822377 (100.00)	1126149 (100.00)	1752718 (100.00)	2.59	4.52	3.55

Source: Government of India, census (various issues), Ghuman et al. (2007), figures in parenthesis are percent.

population movements both national and international. Punjab became pioneer in Green revolution in 1960's and with it; the scope for the industrial development increased and created the need for strengthening infrastructure facilities.

With the dominant pattern of rural to urban migration within Punjab and inflow of migrant labour from other backward states, there was a simultaneous increase in out-migration of Punjabi workers to other developed countries for still better economic prospects. A major proportion of the migrant labour force working in the industrial sector of Punjab hails from U.P and Bihar. These migrants are attached to Punjab because of better employment opportunities, higher wages, lower economic and social exploitation and the near absence of caste oppression. Migrants are not only employed in agricultural and the industrial sector, but also in other occupations such as building and road construction, brick making and rickshaw pulling etc.

Economic history of world, however, shows that the human migration is the natural manifestation of socio-economic and technological growth/development. The normal course of migration is that it takes place from relatively low developed to high developed regions/countries. The in-migration to Punjab, from other states of India, especially, from U.P and Bihar may be viewed in this context. The incidence of rural poverty in Bihar and U.P in 1993-94 was 58.2 and 42.3%, respectively, which is higher than the national average (37.3%). The corresponding poverty incidence was 42.1 and 33.4% in 2004-05 in Bihar and U.P., respectively. In Punjab, the proportion of rural people living below the poverty line was 9.2% during 2004-05. Thus, Punjab is economically better-off state than Bihar and U.P. And it is, thus, the obvious reason for the migration of these poor rural migrants to Punjab (GOI, 2008).

The total migrants reported in the Census 1981 were of the order of 822377 persons (as shown in the Table 1).

This increased to 1126149 persons in 1991. The annual growth of migrants in Punjab during the period 1981 to 1991 was of the order of 2.59. The inflow of migrants increased sharply during the decade of 1991 to 2001. The total number of migrants increased from 1126149 in 1991 to 1752718 persons in 2001. The rise in flows of migrants in Punjab during the period 1991-2001 was quite sharp. The annual rate of growth comes out to be 4.52%, which is higher than the previous decade. The compound growth rate of migrant inflows to Punjab was 3.55% per annum during the period 1981 to 2001. The overall growth rate is higher than the first decade that is 1981 to 1991 compared with the 1991 to 2001.

This implies that the migrant flow to Punjab was higher in the decade of 1991 to 2001 than that of the 1981 to 1991. However, the similar trends can also be seen from table so far as the growth rates of migrants coming from other important states are concerned (Ghuman et al., 2007). The migration by workers is mostly a well considered economic decision and not a random one, a rational and not a rash move. The process of migration being a selective process, it often results from imbalances of economic change and chances. In this context, the importance of the study also lies in the investigation of the determinants of the labour migration and its impacts. But what about those who are behind all this? Who are these persons, what problems they actually have and what role this movement plays, in their lives? This study is an attempt to explore all these facts about migration.

#### SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The study is based both on primary and secondary data. The data for the study have been mainly generated through a comprehensive questionnaire. The area chosen for the field work is Patiala city. The respondents were contacted personally and relevant

information was gathered from them with the utmost care. The study has also drawn upon various government reports, the annual statistical abstract of Punjab, and the findings of individual researchers. In all, sample has been drawn out of 10 occupations in which most of the migrant labourers get work. After the selection of the occupations, we have randomly selected 10 migrant labourers from each category so that equal weight age should be given to each category.

## MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

It was revealed that out of 100 respondents, 74% migrant labourers were found to be from Bihar and the remaining 26% were from Uttar Pradesh. The interesting feature which came into notice is that all the (100%) respondents were found to be from rural areas. Not even a single labourer migrated from urban area.

High poverty and unemployment in their native places, wage difference and attraction of city life are the major factors responsible for their preference of migrating to urban areas rather than the rural ones. This indicates that rural to urban migration is the dominant pattern among the different patterns of migration.

An interesting fact that came into notice is that 67% of the migrant labourers were found to be those who have initially migrated to agricultural (rural) areas but very soon (due to unlimited supply, hard toil and seasonal employment), they migrated to urban areas. During the last two decades, the labour absorption capacity of Punjab agriculture has been declining continuously. As such the availability of employment in terms of man days has reduced in a big way over the period of time. Both the cultivators and local agricultural labour are becoming surplus (Gill, 2000). Thus, it is obvious that the migrant labourers move towards urban areas.

Survey also reveals the main activity of the migrants during the year before migration. It was found that 54% of the migrant labourers were unemployed before migration. The 33% migrant labourers were engaged in agricultural works followed by 6% engaged in non agricultural activities and only 1% were student. The area from where most of the migrants came had a strong caste system with unique characteristics.

We have grouped them namely into general, schedule caste and backward castes. These three main caste groups include various other castes and sub-castes. Survey reveals that majority of the migrant labourers that is 78%, belonged to the backward castes followed by 16% from the scheduled castes. It is revealing that only 6% migrant labourers belonged to general castes. It is further interesting to note that there are certain occupations where there is no worker from general castes. The migrant labourers are thus, mainly coming from the scheduled and backward castes. In general, these are the resource poor sections of the society and hence, are migrating in search of employment.

Study presents the marital status of the sampled migrant labourers. It is evident that 91% of the migrant

labourers were found to be married followed by 7% unmarried and 2% widower. Further, out of the total married respondents more than three-fourth (77%) of the respondents has been living in Punjab without their spouse and children, followed by 17.8% living with spouse and children both. When the migrant labourers migrate to Punjab, they have to struggle and remain idle for some days so, in order to save their wives and children from these kinds of problems, they migrate without their wives and children. Secondly, the wives of these migrant labourers have to look after the aged members especially, parents-in-laws at the native place.

Thirdly, their wives stay at native places to look after their young ones, domestic cattle and to work in their own fields. Then their children also migrate and join their fathers. It is thus, clear that it is mainly the male migration. Certain other important reasons for not bringing their wives to Punjab are the economic viability and social environment. Due to all these reasons, the migrant workers are compelled to live without their wives and children. Of course, they feel a serious homesick and emotional sickness. Majority of the labourers revealed that they are undergoing this torture mainly because of the economic and social compulsions.

Table 2 depicts monthly earnings of the migrant labourers in Punjab and notional earnings at their native places. It is revealing that in Punjab, on an average, migrant labourers earn Rs. 3157 per month whereas, if these labourers do the same work in their native places, then on an average they would earn Rs. 1232 per month. It simply reveals that in Punjab, the earnings are more than two and a half times the earnings in the native places of the migrant labourers. Thus, higher wage rate and higher earnings are the main pull factors which force the migrant labourers to leave their native places. Alternatively, the lower wage rate and the lower earnings are the major factors behind their out-migration. The table signifies that there is a huge inequality in earnings of labourers between Punjab and other states, particularly, with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The study also depicts the average number of days the migrant labourers get work in a year in Punjab. It also reveals the average monthly earnings of the migrant labourers in Punjab. Nearly two-fifth (42%) of the migrant labourers get work between 275 - 300 days in a year followed by nearly one-fourth (23%) who get work between 300 - 325 days. About one-fifth (21%) get work for 250 - 275 days and 14% for 225 - 250 days. On an average, the migrant labourers get work for 281 days in a year. It is; thus, clear that all the migrant labourers fall in the category of main workers (Director of Census Operations, Punjab, 2002).

It is significant to note that vegetable vendors, shop assistants, fruit vendors, rickshaw pullers, cobblers get work for 309, 300, 297, 297 and 292 days, respectively, whereas, factory workers, masons, grain market labourers, construction workers and plumbers get work for 280, 273, 264, 258 and 237 days. The nature of occupation is,

**Table 2.** Average monthly earnings in Punjab and notional average earnings at their native place (Rs per month).

Occupation 1	In Punjab 2	At native place 3	Difference 4	Col 3 as percent of col 25	Col 4 as percent of col 26
Shop assistant	2835	1100	1735	38.80	61.20
Grain market labourer	2040	880	1160	43.13	56.87
Construction worker	2600	1150	1450	44.23	55.77
Vegetable vendor	2970	1430	1540	48.15	51.85
Rickshaw puller	2703	1150	1553	42.54	57.46
Mason	4150	1520	2630	36.63	63.37
Cobbler	2870	1170	1700	40.77	59.23
Fruit vendor	4253	1420	2833	33.39	66.61
P.o.p , etc	3590	1300	2290	36.21	63.79
Factory worker	3560	1200	2360	33.70	66.30
Average	3157.10	1232	1925.1	39.02	60.98

Source: Field survey (2009).

thus, responsible for their low earnings and for low number of days they get work. The worst condition is of grain market labourers and construction workers who have average monthly income of Rs. 2040 and Rs. 2600, respectively.

Study presents the classification of the migrant labourers by the ownership of agricultural land at the native places. Survey reveals that 54% of the migrant labourers do not have any land asset at their native place. The 37% have land up to only one hectare followed by 8% with 1 to 2 hectares and only 1% with 2 to 4 hectares. It is significant to note that almost all the (99%) land holders were marginal and small farmers and such a small holding is not economically viable in their native places. Moreover, the land holdings are joint holdings.

Most of the migrant labourers who have land assets at their native place were found to be factory workers, fruit vendors, masons and plumbers.

It was revealed by the respondents that though they have land at their native place yet, it was not generating sufficient income to support the entire family. Moreover, the land was not of good quality and mainly rain-fed agriculture is being practiced. As such the yield was very low. Some respondents told the researcher that they have also managed to purchase some land from the earnings in Punjab.

The land prices at their native place are much lower than those in Punjab. Study also depicts the classification of the migrant labourers according to the factors behind their migration. All the factors have been classified into two broad categories namely; push factors and pull factors. Survey clearly states that poverty (100%), unemployment (54%) and floods (33%) are the major push factors responsible for their migration. Under-employment (20%) and disguised unemployment (26%) are other push factors. Among the pull factors, better employment opportunities (100%) and wage difference

(100%) are the major factors which attract the migrant labourers to Punjab.

It is interesting to note that employment factor, in one way or the other came out to be very important push factor. It was revealed by the workers, during the field survey that underemployment was both in terms of number of days and wage rate. Twenty six percent disguised unemployment confirms Nurkse's (1955) view that there is high proportion of disguised unemployment in the agriculture sector of the under developed countries.

It was also observed by the researcher that as the Indians feel shame and they hesitate to do low level labour works in their own country and they happily prefer to do the same work in foreign countries; in the same way the migrant labourers which migrate to Punjab, prefers to do any sort of work in Punjab instead of doing the same work in their native places.

There is a long list of problems which these poor migrant labourers have to face. Their problems start with the moment they decide to migrate and continue to face peculiar problems from travelling to destination places. They have to face a large number of problems which push them out of their native places. Lack of employment, low wage rate, poverty, repressive environment, terror of the zamindars and money lenders' forces are some of the serious problems which oppressed people face in the areas supplying migrant labour. Those labourers who decide to migrate face two specific problems:

(a) Most of the poor migrant labourers do not have financial resources to finance their journey to Punjab. They borrow money from zamindars and money lenders. The rate of interest charged on loans for travelling to Punjab is very high.

(b) Migrants consist entirely of adult males mostly below the age of 40 years. They leave their young wives and children to be looked after by old males and relatives.

**Table 3.** Age of the migrant labourers.

Age(years)	Age at the time of first migration	Age at the time of migration to Punjab	Age at the time of survey
1 - 5	3	3	0
5 - 10	3	1	0
10 - 15	4	4	2
15 - 20	21	17	3
20 - 25	39	27	7
25 - 30	25	35	23
30 - 35	5	12	36
35 - 40	0	1	21
40 - 45	0	0	5
45 - 50	0	0	3
Total	100	100	100

Source: Field survey (2009).

This creates many complications for the family members left behind.

After reaching their place of destination, the migrant labourers are eagerly wanted by ticket checking railways staff, police and farmers/contractors on the railway stations. Many of the respondents made complaint that the railways staff and police harass on one pretext or the other. This happens generally with those who visit Punjab for the first time and also all alone. The studies by Parthasarthy (1996), Mukherjee (1993) and Ghuman (2007) found that although; social, political, demographic and cultural factors had an impact on the migrants, yet, migration was primarily for economic reasons. Economic reasons include push factors in the rural areas and pull factors in the urban areas. Unemployment, underemployment, poverty, social and family disputes, terrorist activities and unviable land holdings are the push factors which motivate the migrants to move. On the other hand, wage differentials, better employment opportunities and attraction of city life are the pull factors which motivate the migrant labourers to migrate.

Table 3 presents the age-wise classification of the migrant labourers in Punjab. As the table clarifies that nearly two-fifth of the respondents (39%) have their first migration at the age between 20 - 25 years followed by one-fourth (25%) of the migrant labourers in the age between 25 - 30 years and nearly one-fifth (21%) between 15 - 20 years. It signifies that due to pull and push factors, the migrant labourers are forced to leave their native places during their young age. Nearly one-third of the respondents (35%) had their first migration to Punjab at the age between 25 - 30 years followed by nearly one-fourth (27%) at the age between 20 - 25 years and nearly one-sixth (17%) at the age between 15 - 20 years.

The data displays that soon after their first migration, the migrant labourers headed towards Punjab. The study also reveals that 62% of the migrant labourers have their

first migration to Punjab. Similarly, when the survey was conducted, nearly one-third (36%) of the respondents were in the age group of 30 - 35 years followed by nearly one-fourth (23%) in the age group 25 - 30 years and nearly one-fifth (21%) in the age group of 35 - 40 years. This shows that once the migrant labourers migrate to Punjab, then they have high tendency to stay in Punjab for longer periods. The migrant labourers, who were of very young age when they migrated for the very first time, came along with their family members. In the table, the migrant labourers who migrated in their young age that is in the age group of 1 - 5 and 5 - 10 came along with their parents when their parents migrated to the places of destination. It was observed that the young people are more prone to migration because being courageous and having almost no social liability, they are more mobile than the older ones. Moreover, the young people being energetic and having more stamina are also preferred by the local Punjabi people. In other words, the migration flow dries up after the age of 35 years. It leads us to say that the migratory labourers have to do work for their livelihood and to support their families in a much younger age. They have to start earning bread for themselves and for their families at a very young age. It is very significant to note that 85% migrant labourers migrated out from their native place at the age group of 15 - 30 years, the most productive age of a labourer. Further, 91% labourers' age group was between 15 to 35 years, when they migrated to Punjab. Thus, the labourers start migration just after attaining the legal age for work. The labourers with an age above 35 years normally do not migrate. In other words, the migration flow has a tendency to dry up after the age of 35 years.

The studies by Premi (1980), Sharma (1982), and Anju (1991) found that people into urban areas migrate at young age groups (15 to 35 years) and possess superior level of education and superior level of skills in comparison to the non-migrants at the places of origin. Further, these studies found that migration is mostly male

oriented. As far as educational attainment of the migrant labourers is concerned, it was found that the level of education of the migrant labourers is very low. Nearly three fourth (73%) of the migrant labourers were found to be illiterate. Out of the remaining 27 respondents, 74.07% (20) had education up to primary level followed by 14.81% (4) with middle level education and 11.11% (3) up to matric level education. Poverty and lack of employment opportunities at their native places have been the major reasons for their out-migration and thus, it is pertinent to say that the migratory labourers have to abandon their studies in search of employment amidst poverty.

Education is a crucial input for modernization as it enables a person to understand his surroundings and environment and to acquire information for promotion of self-interest. The right to education has been described as a basic human right. Education is known as the third eye of a human being. A man without education is equal animal. Education plays a very important role in the process of migration. It helps the migrant labourers to have information about employment opportunities elsewhere. The survey further reveals that out of 27 literate migrant labourers, 70.37% (19) got their education from government schools whereas the remaining 29.63% (8) from private schools. It is thus, important to note that it is largely the government schools which are imparting education to the rural poor. The level of formal elementary education has no direct influence on the process of migration of the labourers.

As far as the duration of stay of migrant labourers in Punjab is concerned, survey shows that 73% of the migrant labourers have been staying in Punjab for more than 5 years. Another 19% migrant labourers have been living for more than 10 years followed by 6% for more than 15 years and 2% for more than 20 years. Among the 27% migrant labourers who have been living in Punjab for less than 5 years, are the young ones who recently migrated to Punjab. It also came into notice that once the migrant labourers migrate to Punjab, they prefer to stay here for longer period. Study also revealed the visits paid by the migrant labourers to their native places after their migration to Punjab. The study highlights that 61% of the migrant labourers have the tendency of visiting their native places once in 9 to 12 months in a year and 19% visit once in 6 to 9 months followed by 12% who pay a visit after every 12 months. There are 4% labourers who have permanently settled down in Punjab and they hardly visit their native places.

The main reasons for migrants visiting their native places appear to be the social and emotional attachment. The study also states that they prefer to stay in Punjab for maximum number of days in a year in order to work for larger number of days and hence, could increase their earnings. Survey also reveals that 89% of the migrant labourers were found to be those who live collectively either with their families/relatives or with their friends.

Majority of them were found to be working under the unhygienic conditions. These migrant labourers collectively take a room/house on rent and share the rent, simply aiming to save money. It was found that nearly 4 to 6 migrant labourers reside in a single room. It was also found that only 5% migrant labourers cook their food individually whereas the remaining 95% cook collectively. These 95% also comprise those who have their families over here or those who take their meals from dhaba's etc. Nevertheless, collective living and cooking are mainly due to economic reasons: cost cutting on both the counts. Of course, the sense of security and community feeling are other important reasons behind such a tendency of living and cooking together. All the respondents were found to be those who used to take bath daily during summer season but during winter season, only 25% of them used to take bath daily. Only 30% of the respondents used to wash clothes daily, while majority of them, that is 70% used to wash clothes once in 3 to 5 days. The socio-cultural matrix among the migratory labourers underwent a significant change over the period of time. They have adopted the convenient names, local food habits by replacing rice with wheat and maize and Punjabi language.

It was disclosed by the survey that 92% migrant labourers were found to be those who take meals two times a day and only 8% migrant labourers were found to be those who take meals three times a day. Most of the migrant labourers were found to have tea two to three times a day. Due to low income and strong saving tendency, these migrant labourers are constrained to cut their meals. Sometimes, they are so much tight that they have to take their meals only once a day. This reveals that these migrant labourers are always worried about savings, in order to remit back home, even at the cost of their health. Besides, their food contents are invariably of poor quality. It was observed during the survey that most of the migrant labourers were under-nourished and mal-nourished.

As far as behaviour of the local people of Punjab towards these migrant labourers is concerned, survey shows that 67% of the migrant labourers were found to be those who were usually been treated in rude/bad manner by the local people. As reported by these migrant labourers, sometimes certain railway officials create hardships for them. The attitude of the railway officials is very rude towards these migrants. In certain cases, under the grab of security checking, the police personnel searched their belongings such as bags, trunks, pockets etc. and snatched their valuable articles as well as hard earned money from them which were meant for their family members living in their native places. Taking advantage of their illiteracy and poverty, middlemen(masons) practice exploitative recruitment practices and in many cases, retain a significant portion of their wages as their own commission. It was also disclosed by the respondents that the local rickshaw pullers do not

allow these migrant rickshaw pullers to join their unions.

It was also found that majority of the migrant labourers that is 87%, were called not by their actual names but by the term convenient to the local people such as Bhaiya, Ramu, Shamu etc. Noticeably, the ' Bhaiya ', ' Ramu ', ' Shamu ' etc are called with a sense of contempt towards the migrant labourers. Though, this is a change in the migrant's cultural aspect but the change is not favourable because one should be called with respect by one's actual name.

Majority of the migrant labourers had to work for extra time, often without extra payment. Most of the migrant labourers were found to be those who were given wages less than the local labourers. The major reasons for discrimination against the migrant labourers regarding wages appeared to be uncertainty of employment and pressure of daily consumption needs. The migrant labourers feared to face unemployment if they refuse to do work at low wage rates at the present place. It seems quite difficult and disturbing to settle at another place in Punjab as the uncertainty of employment always looms large on the minds of the migrant labourers. So, they are compelled to accept work at lower wage rates as compared to their local counterparts. Apart from this, they are under a constant threat of insecurity at the level of psyche. There are certain elements in Punjab who raise slogans like "bhaiya' bhajao, Punjab bachao" (push out the migrant labourers to save Punjab).

Table 4 examines the occupation wise monthly expenditure of the migrant labourers in Punjab. The table reveals that the grain market labourers have the minimum monthly expenditure of Rs. 1201 whereas fruit vendors and masons have the maximum monthly expenditure as Rs. 2741.90 and Rs. 2462, respectively.

Overall average monthly expenditure of the migrant labourers was found to be Rs. 2046.16. The average has been worked out by taking actual number of labourers spending on each component. "Miscellaneous" include expenditure on illness, foot wears, haircut, shave, mobile bill, lottery, utensils etc.

It is significant to note that on an average, across the occupations, 45 - 60% of their consumption expenditure constituted the expenditure on food items. It supports the economic theory that people in the lower income brackets spend a sizeable proportion of their income on the food items. The other significant item of consumption is tobacco, followed by house rent. The share of expenditure on clothes is the least. On an average, the daily consumption expenditure of the migrant labourers was found to be Rs. 67.27. It is significant to note that Gupta's report, 2008 states that nearly 78% of the Indian people cannot incur more than Rs. 20 per day on consumption. Gupta designated them as 'common man' of India. However, the average daily consumption of the migrant labourers in Punjab is much higher than Rs. 20 per day (Rs. 67.27).

It was found that 20% migrant labourers do not pay rent

as they live under the sheds, open places or in go downs. This clearly depicts their miserable conditions of living. It simply shows that more than anything else, economic factor is the real serious matter of concern for them. It was found that nearly 4 to 6 migrant labourers reside in a single room. Further, it was discovered that those migrant labourers who have their spouse, children or both in Punjab, has to pay more rent as compared to other migrant labourers. However, their spouses do supplement their earnings by serving as part time maid servants in the nearby households. It is significant to tell here that, when these migrant labourers were asked if they will pay rent to the government in case they are provided houses by the government, 96% of them replied positively. As far as the consumption of tobacco, alcohol, etc is concerned, on an average a migrant labourer spends Rs. 292.40 per month on these intoxicants. Nevertheless, the consumption of these intoxicants is harmful to the labourers' health and economy.

Table 5 represents the annual earnings and remittances of the migrant labourers in Punjab. The average annual earnings and remittances of all the migrant labourers (as shown in the table), were turned out to be Rs. 37885.20 and Rs. 9233.10, respectively. Across the various activities, masons and fruit vendors send maximum amount of remittances to their native places of Rs. 16170 and Rs. 13150, respectively. Vegetable vendors, construction workers and rickshaw pullers send minimum amount of remittances equal to Rs. 3850, Rs. 6471 and Rs. 7465, respectively.

The reason behind the diversity in their remittances lies somewhere in the nature of their employment. Fruit vendors and masons as mentioned earlier, have high monthly income as compared to other categories especially vegetable vendors, construction workers and rickshaw pullers. The studies by Chandan (1979), Dupont (1992) and Taylor (1999) reveal the problems and positive role of the migrant labourers. These studies state that remittances play a significant positive role in the development of the native places.

Nearly half (55%) of the migrant labourers want to settle in Punjab on permanent basis whereas; the other (45%) migrant labourers want to go back to their native places. It is important to note that 84% of the respondents are willing to go back to their native places if sufficient work, food and shelter are available to them at their native places. Survey discovered that only 31% migrant labourers had taken loan before coming to Punjab and only 2 migrant labourers were found to be under debt who has taken loan after migrating to Punjab. After migrating to Punjab, they have managed to return their loans with the earnings in Punjab. It was also found that the loan to these migrant labourers was given at very high interest rates (6 – 9% per month) and the loan was provided to them by the private money lenders. The total loan amount on 31 labourers was found to be Rs 7.03 lakhs and the average loan per head was found to be

**Table 4.** Per capita average monthly expenditure of the migrant labourers on various components of consumption in Punjab.

Occupation	Components of consumption ( Rs. per month )								Total
	Food and other eatables	House rent	Fuel	Elect. bill	Clothing	Tobacco etc	Bus, train faire etc	Miscellaneous	
S.A	1025	169.60	100.00	140.00	33.00	228.00	70.00	289	2054.60
G.M.L	790	15.00	37.00	00	25.00	231.00	25.00	78	1201.00
C.W	900	163.00	89.00	110.00	35.00	245.00	110.00	128	1780.00
V.V	925	190.00	74.00	117.00	37.00	238.00	104.00	380	2065.00
R.P	925	100.00	41.00	24.00	18.00	271.00	62.00	440	1881.00
Ma	1195	88.00	93.00	98.00	29.00	388.00	125.00	446	2462.00
Cob	1150	143.11	79.00	85.00	25.00	190.00	53.00	107	1832.11
F.V	1146	234.90	63.00	159.00	43.00	448.00	117.00	531	2741.90
P.o.P	1180	143.00	80.00	81.00	22.00	365.00	95.00	370	2336.00
F.W	1100	140.00	58.00	62.00	20.00	320.00	83.00	325	2108.00
Total average	1033.6	138.66	71.40	87.60	28.70	292.40	84.4	309.4	2046.16

Source: Field survey (2009), Average of the last column.

**Table 5.** Annual earnings, consumption and remittances by the migrant labourers (Rs).

Occupation	Average annual earnings ( 2 )	Average annual consumption in Punjab ( 3 )	Average remittances ( 4 )	Col 3 as % of col 2 ( 5 )	Col 4 as % of col 2 ( 6 )
Shop assistant	34020.00	24655.20	6150.00	72.47	18.08
Grain market labourer	24480.00	14412.00	6240.00	58.87	25.49
Construction worker	31200.00	21360.00	6471.00	68.46	23.45
Vegetable vendor	35640.00	24780.00	3850.00	69.52	16.02
Rickshaw puller	32436.00	22572.00	7465.00	69.58	23.75
Mason	49800.00	29544.00	16170.00	59.33	32.47
Cobbler	34440.00	21985.32	10120.00	63.84	29.38
Fruit vendor	51036.00	32902.80	13150.00	64.47	25.77
P.o.p , etc	43080.00	28032.00	10232.00	65.07	28.05
Factory worker	42720.00	25296.00	12483.00	59.21	32.82
Net average	37885.20	24553.93	9233.10	64.81	26.20

Source: Field survey (2009).

Rs 22677. It was also found that most of the migrant labourers who have taken loans before migrating to Punjab have totally repaid their loans. Certainly, their migration has helped to repay the

loan which they raised at their native places.

The main policy implications and recommendations of the study, on the basis of analysis and field observations, are as follows: It is observed

that the majority of the migrant labourers start working at the age when they are supposed to be in school. This is largely because of poverty. Only 3% of the migrant labourers were found to be



having education up to matriculation and not even a single migrant labourer was reported to have education above matric. Such a dismal situation necessitates revamping of the rural school education in their native places.

The government must assume a lead role in making quality education available, accessible and affordable to these poor people. These migrant labourers should be helped financially in attaining education. It is also because education is a lever through which entire rural life can be transformed and plans of rural development can attain their targeted objectives. There are certain elements in Punjab who raise slogans like “bhaiya ' bhajao, Punjab bachao” (push out the migrant labourers to save Punjab). Instead of this slogan, the slogan should be “mehnat naal kamm karo ate Punjab bachao” (Do hard work and save Punjab).

As the main reasons behind migration are resourcelessness, unemployment and poverty, there is an urgent need to find out ways and means to supplement their incomes at their native places. It is very crucial to create employment opportunities in their native places.

Rural unemployment is one of the burning problems that India has been facing. Its severity has increased in the period following the new economic reforms. To think more about it is to think more about Indian rural problems in general and rural-to-urban migration in particular. The key is now to guarantee employment. Empowerment of these rural people with skill and education is the only way to transform their woes into happiness. Migrant labourers need appropriate interventions programmes by the Central and State governments and various social partners and NGOs to ameliorate their lot. One of the important requirements is the creation of a reliable information system for labour migration. Much of the work of providing welfare and effective implementation of existing legislations are stymied by the absence of accurate information on the conditions of employment, magnitude and composition of various streams of migration.

There is also a need to evolve some institutional mechanism to protect the migrant labourer from the discrimination and ill-treatment they face at working place and also in the society. Their living conditions also need to be improved. Most of the migratory workers, sometimes hesitate to visit their families because of transport expenses. The railways may evolve some policy to issue a concessional ticket, may be twice a year, so that they may feel encouraged to visit their close relatives at their native place. It is the duty of our state and central government to aware these migrant labourers of the drawbacks pertaining from the consumption of intoxicants like bidi, tobacco etc. There is no doubt that our central government has got a lot of success and positive response with the implementation of NREGA in our country but there is

a dire need of these kind of some more policies. Since, all the migrant labourers are working in the unorganized sector, the government must take some policy initiatives to improve their socio-economic conditions and also introduce some social security measures.

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