

Invisible Migration in India  
(A Case Study of Lucknow City in Uttar Pradesh)

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MIGRATION FROM rural India is a complex process characterised by a variety of outcomes. The movement of workers follows different streams covering a wide range of occupations. Daily commuting to nearby villages and urban locations is on the rise and this has emerged as an important stream of mobility. The range of activities pursued at the destination is also steadily expanding. The type of work ranges from highly skilled white collar jobs to black collar (unskilled manual work). Circular migration is defined as a temporary move from rural to urban followed by return to usual place of residence for purpose of employment. Whereas, a permanent migration is the one where one who lives at the place(s) of his/her work for more than a year, although they may visit their native place on occasions (Rao: 2009). Moreover, circular migration, much of it seasonal, is now an integral part of the livelihood strategies pursued by a large number of poor people living in agriculturally marginal areas. For individual households, it may be a precursor to more permanent out-migration or an enduring phenomenon in its own rights (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). In his study Singh et al. 1980 has observed that the migrants from rural areas retain attachment to their native places. They continue to maintain links with their families and village through regular visits and sending remittances. Migration is one means of coming out of low-income activities, such as agriculture and also some non-farm traditional occupations. They have also argued that diversification as a first step at household level towards structural transformation at national level (*Ibid*). Transformation is acknowledged to contain social elements, but conventionally is mainly defined in economic terms and includes: sectoral shifts away from low-productivity agriculture towards higher-productivity, non-agriculture activity and more recently from industry to services. As "rural migration" is concerned, it is a phenomenon that describes the movement of the people from their village to urban areas, usually in search of better livelihood.

Indeed, seasonal migration has had a very significant place in migration studies however, it is invisible in government records. Census of India and National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO)

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are the two sources of migration data in India. Census provides data on migrants based on place of birth and place of last residence. If the place of birth or place of last residence is different from the place of enumeration, a person is defined as migrant. On the contrary, if the place of birth and place of enumeration is the same, the person is non-migrant. Thus, migrants defined on the basis of place of birth or place of last residence are called lifetime migrants because the time of their move is unknown. Whereas, NSSO collects migration data on basis on residing number of days.

Thus, Census data and NSSO data are not useful in this regard (because these agencies collect data of permanent and semi-permanent migrants), primary studies are required to explore the different dimensions of problems, including causes of migration, working conditions, mode of work, nature of work, pattern of migration, mode of wage payment system, role of contractor and nature of exploitation. The article deals with primary data, the primary data has been collected from labour Chauraha (squarer's) workers of the Lucknow city in Uttar Pradesh. Labour Chauraha is a local name given to a particular place in the city, where labourers, most of them migrated from rural regions gather in early morning to sell their labour power to contractor, direct employers, who come looking for casual, daily-wage labour for their worksite. The data has been collected for four selected labour Chaurahas (squares) in Lucknow city out of 32 (approximately) (Box 1). Four labour Chaurahas on the basis of geographic location of the city (north, south, east and west) were selected. Moreover, the selection of the workers (respondents) was based on purposive sampling. Further, 10 respondents from each selected labour Chaurahas were collected. Thus, the total sample size is 40 respondents.

BOX 1: SELECTED LABOUR CHAURAHAS (SQUARES) IN THE CITY OF LUCKNOW

Total Labour Chaurahas	Selected Labour Chaurahas
Trivani Nagar, Goyal Chaurahas, Devpur Railway Crossing, Rajajipuram, Sahadatganj, Nakkhas, Thakur Ganj, Balaganj, Hydel Chaurahas, Rakab Ganj, Sarvodya Nagar, Daliganj, Telibagh, Aminabad, Udayganj, Mulaya Nagar, Chinhat, Lekhraj, Nishatganj, Unity City, Engineering College, Khurram Nagar, Alamnabagh, Bherdhapur, C-block, Barabirva-1, Barabirva-2, Patrakarpur, Badi Pakadiya, O-Sector LDA, Sadar	Telibagh, Engineering College, Uday Ganj Nisat Ganj.

SOURCE: As per reported by local settled peoples, workers and Gramin Development Services (an NGO working on internal migration in Lucknow city); 2011

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**About the City**

Lucknow is the capital city of Uttar Pradesh and a rapidly growing city in India. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for workers in both sectors, formal and informal. Here, we deal with informal sector workers, especially construction sector in the city. The labour chaurah workers are among the most visible category of workers in the informal sector. Majority of the workers engaged in construction sector are migrants. These workers comprise of un-skilled and semi-skilled nature, such as, Beldaar, loader/unloader, earth digging workers, mason, painter, carpenter, etc. in case of assembling of migrant workers in the city of Lucknow they migrated from neighbouring states and districts of Uttar Pradesh. The city is confined in northern region by Sitapur and Hardoi districts, on eastern side by Barabanki district and western boundary by Unnao district and southern border by Raibareli district.

**Socio Characteristics of the Workers**

Table 1 shows the socio profile of the migrant Labour Chaurahas workers of the city by sex, state, marital status, and types of family and education level. Sex wise data revealed that out of total 20 per cent are female, rest 80 per cent are male workers. Within the female workers all are from OBC community. In case of male, about 56 per cent from OBC, followed by 31 per cent from General and rest of them are from SC category. It is needed to mention here, during the survey female workers reported that, they migrated because they had lost their breadwinner in their family, as a result they were forced to move out for livelihood. In some cases female workers move with their spouses along with children. As per root states are concerned, the study focus on Uttar Pradesh, as a result 65 per cent of the workers are from same state, whereas 30 per cent from Chhattisgarh and rest of the five per cent are from Bihar. Within caste brackets along with states, the data show that huge size of migrants are from OBC category, second is General and last is from SC community. In sum, almost all the migrants belonged to backward categories. About marital status, the survey data show that 83 per cent migrants are married followed by 17 per cent who are un-married. Hence, evidence shows that married workers migrated more compared to unmarried, according to secondary literature. Types of family is another factor influencing migration, several studies argued that migration is positively related with types of family (Connell, et. al., 1976). Table 1 data revealed that out of total about three-fourth (78%) are from nuclear family and 22 per cent are from joint family. With reference to educational level of labour Chauraha workers, about 40 per cent are illiterate, followed by

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33 per cent upper primary educated, 12 per cent are primary educated, three per cent are high school and only two per cent are graduate and above.

TABLE 1: SOCIO CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKERS

Items	Particulars	SC		OBC*		General		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sex	Male	4	12.5	18	56.3	10	31.3	32	80.0
	Female	0	0.0	8	100.0	0	0.0	8	20.0
Root States	Uttar Pradesh	4	15.4	14	53.8	8	30.8	26	65.0
	Bihar	0	0.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	2	5.0
	Chhattisgarh	0	0.0	11	91.7	1	8.3	12	30.0
Marital Status	Married	4	12.1	23	69.7	6	18.2	33	82.5
	Unmarried	0	0.0	3	42.9	4	57.1	7	17.5
Types of Family	Nuclear	3	9.7	23	74.2	5	16.1	31	77.5
	Joint	1	11.1	3	33.3	5	55.6	9	22.5
Education Level	Illiterate	2	12.5	12	75.0	2	12.5	16	40.0
	Primary	0	0.0	4	80.0	1	20.0	5	12.5
	Upper primary	2	13.3	9	60.00	4	26.67	15	37.5
	High School	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	100.0	1	7.5
	Graduate & above	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	1	2.5
Total		4	10.0	26	65.0	10	25.0	40	100.0

SOURCE: Field Survey, 2011.

NOTE: In OBC category Muslims are included.

**Landholding**

Several studies have concluded that poor and landless have a greater propensity to migrate than the richers and big landowners. Further, persons from the landless households were found mainly migrated for their survival, because a work/job may not be available in all the seasons in the rural areas and they may not be capable to fulfill their minimum cost of livelihood during off agricultural season. Moreover, statistical analysis has also proved that between land-man ratio and migration have a very significant relationship. In their empirical study Shau and Das (2010) found that correlation coefficient between land-man ratio and the proportion of workers migrating out of the total number of family members is statistically significant. This is to suggest that population pressure on land is a relevant factor that induces outward migration from 'depressed' rural areas. Land fragmentation, drought, increasing severe ground water scarcity and

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the consequent inability of agriculture in many areas to provide more than a single season's employment, as well as the increasing uncertain financial environment, falling farming—all help to 'push' labourers into other occupations. Rapid urban growth and its demand for labourers in construction, brick-making and small scale services; all help to 'pull' workers into new areas and occupations, despite the risks and isolation from family (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). Table 2 data on landholding size with caste categories shows that about one-fourth (25%) workers are landless, among total landless workers half of them (50%) are from General category, 30 per cent from OBC and rest of them (20%) from SC category. Whereas, 27.5 per cent workers belonged from up to one acre category and nearly 82 per cent are from OBC category. Only 18 per cent workers have one to two acre land, 25 per cent have two to four acre land, three per cent have four to six acre land and merely two per cent workers have above six acre land. In sum, the survey data concluded that greater part of labour Chauraha workers are landless (landless plus up to one acre).

TABLE 2: LANDHOLDINGS SIZE BY CASTE CATEGORY

Landholdings	SC		OBC		General		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Landless	2	20.0	3	30	5	50.0	10	25.0
Up to 1 acre	2	18.2	9	81.8	0	0.0	11	27.5
1 acre to 2 acre	0	0.0	6	85.7	1	14.29	7	17.5
2 acre to 4 acre	0	0.0	6	60.0	4	40.0	10	25.0
4 acre to 6 acre	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	1	2.5
Above 6 acre	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	1	2.5
Total	4	10.0	26	65.0	10	25.0	40	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

#### Reasons for Migration

Reasons for migration of labour are varied and complex. It may be the need for additional income or a desire for employment of consumer goods and consumer durables or to invest in business and/or education. Land fragmentation, drought, increasing severe ground water scarcity and the consequent inability of agriculture in many areas to provide more than a single season's employment, as well as the increasing uncertain financial environment, falling farming all help to 'push' labourers into other occupations. On the other side, rapid urban growth and its demand for labourers in construction, brick-making and small scale services; all help to 'pull' workers into new areas and occupations, despite the risks and isolation from family that migration

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process (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). As per Census of India (2001) data reveals that two-third population of the country (India) lives in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The economic pull of urban areas, where non-agricultural incomes are more than agricultural incomes, and where, urban incomes are also secure than rural ones. Not only availability of limited employment opportunity of rural areas is confined exclusively to rural areas but also lack of year-round employment has been one of the main reasons for out-migration. In their study of four selected districts in Bihar (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009) found that the attraction of city life has become a major factor in shaping migration decision especially for young people and this explains in part high migration rates among the better off. Migration and remittance have improved the standard of living of thousand of families in the poorest district of Bihar. Among the poorest unskilled labourers, even though the accumulation of assets is minimal and the costs in terms of children's education are high, migration helps to smooth security and reduce reliance on money lenders (Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009). Table 3 shows the reasons for migration, livelihood is one of the main push factor that compel labour to move-out from their roots as reported by 50 per cent workers. About 15 per cent of the respondents stated repayment of loan, followed by 15 per cent non-availability of work at village, whereas 10 per cent said that they were attracted by the city and 10 per cent family migrated to urban areas due to family problems.

TABLE 3: REASONS FOR MIGRATION

Reasons for Migration	No.	%
For livelihood	20	50.0
Repayment of loan	6	15.0
Non-availability of work at villages	6	15.0
Attraction of the city life	4	10.0
Family problems	4	10.0
Total	40	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

#### Patterns of Social Networking

Information networkers between the village and town are especially important in shaping rural urban migration streams. Information regarding the availability of work opportunities and prevailing wage rate passes through these networks and functions to

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encourage or discourage probability of migrants accordingly. Further the information about the job prospects in the urban labour market migrants is spread by the migrants during their visit to the village. Social network plays a vital role in adaptive function for the migrant once she/he reaches the city (Sundari 2005; p. 2298). According to this survey, Table 5 data revealed that about 32.5 per cent of the respondents came to city with the help of their neighbour workers. Whereas, about 25.0 per cent by self, followed by 22.5 with family members and 20.0 per cent move-out with the help of relatives. Therefore, the majority of workers migrated from their roots with neighbour workers (those are earlier migrated).

TABLE 5: SOCIAL NETWORKS OF THE WORKERS

Social Networks	No.	%
Neighbour Workers	13	32.5
By Self	10	25.0
Family Members	9	22.5
Relatives	8	20.0
Total	40	100.0

SOURCE: Field Survey, 2011.

#### Occupations of the Workers at Destination

Seasonal/ Circular migrants labourers are those who go to work during the slack season, i.e., (December to June every year when there is no possibility of growing any crops in the agricultural lands). Predominantly, the nature of work performed by workers is like construction work, hotel work, and household work. Thus, they are engaged in low paid jobs and occupations. The construction industry generates substantial employment and provides a growth impetus to other sectors through backward and forward linkages. The workers' community accounted for 93 per cent of the total employment in the construction sector in 2005, with predominance of migrant labour force (Eleventh Five Year Plan Document, 2008).

These labour Chauraha workers are mostly engaged in construction industry. Construction sector contains a variety of jobs, skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled. Skilled workers comprise, engineers, electricians, etc., in semi-skilled: mason, plumber and painter and un-skilled categories included, beldar<sup>1</sup> loading/unloading,

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earth digging, etc.. The field data shows, approximately, all the labour Chauraha workers of the city are engaged in diverse categories of construction industry. About 47 per cent workers are Beldar, followed 25 per cent masons, 15 per cent loader/ unloader and 13 per cent painters. Thus, almost half of the total workers are engaged in manual work (beldar, earth digging).

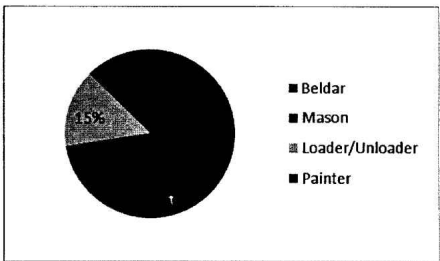


FIG. 1: OCCUPATIONS OF THE WORKERS AT DESTINATION

SOURCE: Field Survey, 2011.

#### CONCLUSION

Workers of the labour Chauraha (squares) are hired on a daily-cum-casual work basis, experiencing unstable employment and earnings. These workers faced many types of vulnerabilities at destination. – Work related risks and status related risks. In work related risks, one of the main problem is insecurity as these workers do not have regular employment as they usually get work, largely for one or two weeks a month on an average. On the other hand, casualty happening in workplace and irregular payment. In health hazards, neither employer nor contractor takes care of casualty happening at workplace. There is no provision of first-aid facilities on behalf of the contractor/employer or compensation for health hazards during working hours.

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*Status related risks:* These migrant workers do not have any identity and entitlement destination, are excluded by society at work place, they often called by their region such as Bihari labour, Chhattisgarhi labour and often exploited by local "ruffians". These workers form an entirely an unorganised sector and due to lack of identities, they are always excluded from social security programme provided by the state. In the case of an accident or other mishap, workers have to spend money from their own pocket as well and then they are debarred from work. Labour Chauraha workers work mostly in construction of buildings which involve hard work (loading and unloading), risk and long hours of work which obviously needs physical strength. Lack of social-security, such as old-age pension scheme, health insurance or life insurance, workers lead a miserable life back in the village. These migrants are predominately forced to migrate because they cannot survive and this becomes more difficult after monsoon season due to inadequate yield of foodgrains from cultivation and lack of employment for rest of the period.

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#### Website

[www.lucnow.nic.in](http://www.lucnow.nic.in) asessed on dated Januray,10.2012

#### Footnote

<sup>1</sup>Beldar is an unskilled worker, working as helper of mason, digging earth, mixing building materials like sand, cement, water etc.