

MUTATION IN WEST BENGAL'S MIGRATION PATTERN: BENGALIS LOOKING SOUTH

RABIUL ANSARY

*Department of Geography
Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India*

MD ZAKARIA SIDDIQUI*

*Department of Humanities and Social Science
Birla Institute of Technology and Science Pilani,
Hyderabad campus, India*

West Bengal, a conventional state for migrant workers in India since the colonial era, mutated to a net sender of migrants as its economy failed to keep pace while new centres of growth emerged i.e., southern Indian states in post-reform era. Owing to squeeze on farm incomes, migration towards urban centres within the state as well as outside the state has seen a quantum jump. Consistent decline of job opportunities in conventional centres like Kolkata, Asansol, Durgapur and others have started pushing away the inter-state migrants to other states. On top of this, Bengalis themselves have begun venturing out of the state to find jobs. Saturation of opportunities in old urban centres such as Delhi and Mumbai and rising sub-nationalism has given way to new centres where migrants from Eastern Indian states including West Bengal, are increasingly moving to. Southern Indian states have begun to emerge as new destination for migrant workers, as they feel more included and secure vis-à-vis rich states of north and western India. The supportive role of government towards migrant workers among South Indian states during Corona pandemic is one example of inclusiveness. The paper utilises information from three Indian Censuses (1991, 2001 and 2011) in exploratory manner to substantiate the arguments.

JEL Classification: A13, F63, F66, J11, J29, J46, O15

Introduction

Internal migrants in India are the unsung heroes of India's much-hailed high economic growth rates. They simultaneously work to energise economies of their host and origin. The host economy remains competitive thanks their low wage labour, and at the same time, they help to keep up the consumption demand in the state of their belonging through remittances. Despite their pivotal role in the national economy, they remain the most insecure and vulnerable set of workers in India.

*Corresponding author Email: zakaria.jnu@gmail.com, mzsiddiqui@hyderabad.bits-pilani.ac.in

The abrupt halt of the country's economy and transport due to Corona pandemic caused unprecedented hardship for the migrant workers. Stories of their sufferings and death are rife in media. To add to indignity they were subjected to harrowing, difficult and never ending journey in scorching heat of Indian summer that Indian Railways made them experience (Sridhar 2020). However, a small minority of migrants were saved from experiencing such indignities. Migrants stuck in western (Gujarat, Maharashtra) and northern (Delhi, Haryana, Punjab) states had to suffer unbearable hardships. However, migrant workers in states of southern India were looked after by respective state government.

The paper focuses on how migrants from the state of West Bengal were already beginning to increasingly see the south Indian urban centres as alternative destinations for their economic fortunes almost a decade ago. Southern states have demonstrated a greater commitment to secular values and have remained immune from sub-nationalistic political tendencies unlike states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

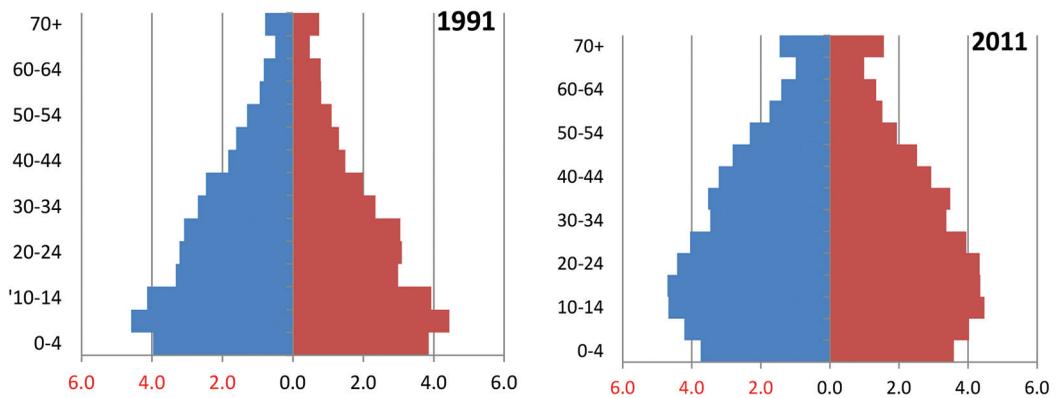
West Bengal is one state that has gone from being a net recipient of migrants to a net sender of migrants. It is this context that warrants special attention. Post-independence West Bengal has witnessed significant demographic, social, political and economic changes. From being the state with the highest per capita income in India during 1960, West Bengal's rank has consistently dwindled – it was 13th in 1990-91 and 26th in 2015-16. More importantly, the state has lost ground to other states such as Maharashtra in terms of the relative size of employment-intensive manufacturing sector (Lahiri and Yi 2009). In 1991 West Bengal's manufacturing sector was about 18% of total domestic product which declined to 8% in 2004-05. From then it has recouped a bit and reached to about 14% in 2017-18.

Currently, the state has more working hands than ever – 67% of the state's population is within the working age group (15-59 years) higher than the national average of 63%. The overall dependency ratio (0-14 and 65+ years per 15-64 years age) of the state is much lower (48.4%) than the national average figure (57%). Although there is a small difference between the state (8.6%) and the national figure (8.1%) in old-age dependency ratio (65+), but in young age dependency ratio contrasting gap is there between the state (40.3%) and the national (48.1%) figure. According to the 2011 census of India, West Bengal has the highest number of working-age population (6.1 cores) among all the states (Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Punjab) which have window of opportunities of demographic dividend.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2018 predicted West Bengal along with other states (Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Punjab) is about to miss the window of opportunities (closing by 2021) of demographic dividend. Although, West Bengal created a substantial number of non-farm sectors jobs compared to most other Indian states between 1994 to 2012 but this was not enough to absorb millions of semi-skilled or unskilled working-age people entering into the job market (World Bank Report 2017). So what are the alternatives left for them? The immediate and the most straightforward coping strategy available to them is to move out to the places where jobs are available. Thus a new migration stream from the state and changing the direction of those migrants

who were entering the state from the other neighbouring states emerged. As per 2011 census, West Bengal, traditionally a net recipient of migrants, for the first time in history has turned into net sender of migrants, i.e., number migrants leaving West Bengal exceeded the number of migrants coming to West Bengal (negative net migration). Existing studies identify that Bengal started draining out its human resources to Hyderabad or Bangalore or Delhi in post-liberalisation period. So in this context critical look at in- and out-migration dynamics of West Bengal during the last three censuses is a value addition. It becomes further more compelling once we consider the swift fertility decline and the massive youth bulge in the state and the context of economic liberalisation in the country.

Over the last three decades the shape of the age-sex pyramid of the state rapidly changed from expansive population base to expanding working-age and old age-groups along with tapering base. The state has achieved below replacement level fertility rate at a relatively low level of economic development from 2.3 (2005-06) to 1.8 (2015-16) children per women. The bulge in working-age population of West Bengal is quite pronounced. Proportion of working age (15-59 years) population increased to 67% in 2011 from 59% in the 1991 census. This swelling of working age population happened mainly on account of the drastic decline in fertility around the 2000s. Owing to this proportion of young age population (less than 15 years) declined by almost 10% percentage points -from 36.6% in 1991 to 27% in 2011



Source: Census of India, ORGI.

Figure 1 Age Sex pyramid of West Bengal

However, there was a marginal increase in the proportion of old age population (70+) between 1991 census to 2011 census increased to 8.6% from 6.6%. In other words, over the last decades working age dependent (young and old age) in the state declined. Thus, the state is transiting through a situation where it faces issues related to the aging population; creating jobs for expanding working-age population. On the other side it faces a demographic challenge of maintaining child population for the base of the pyramid due to reduced fertility.

In West Bengal, more than one-third population reported that their present place is different from their usual place of residence. In other words, 34.4% population (31.4 million) in West Bengal experienced spatial mobility according to the 2011 Census, which

is higher than the last two decades. Corresponding figures for 1991 census (22.3%) and 2001 census (28.1%) indicate its increase. Thus 2011 census figure is 12.1 percentage points higher than the 1991 census.

In the forthcoming sections, we discuss the prominence of intra-state migration in the state and the increasing trend towards the southward movement of male inter-state migrants while female migrate northern states.

Trends in intra-state migration

Total intra-state migrants increased phenomenally at the cost of inter-state migration. Table 1 provides a snapshot of intra-state migration. Latest 2011 census of India (West Bengal) reported out of total 31.4 million migrants, 92.4% (29.1 million) are intra-state (intra-district 22.8 million and inter-district 6.2 million) and remaining 7.6% (2.38 million) are inter-state. Interestingly, two decades back when the figure of total migration in West Bengal was 15.1 million), the share of intra-state migrants was about 87% (13.1million), and inter-state was close to 13% (2 million). So the volume of intra-state migrants more than doubled since the 1991 census, the very year of initiation of economic liberalisation i.e., from 13.1 million in 1991 to 29.1 million in 2011.

Although in 2001 census the state experienced positive (7.69 lakh) inter-state net migration (in-migration minus out-migration) but 2011 census experienced negative (-24.5 thousand) net migration. In terms of the growth rate of inter-state in-migration in the state also found negative growth (-3.21%) between 2001 to 2011 census while it was positive (18.4%) between 1991 and 2001 census. The registered intra-state growth in 2011 census is 45% but lower than (52.6%) the previous decade. For the first decade of reform period i.e., 1991 to 2001 census there is phenomenal growth (121%) of intra-state male migration registered growth rate of 176% and female 105%. Further analyses of intra-state migration by reasons indicate social causes for migration ('marriage') is the dominant one for all three censuses. Even though the share of marriage-related migration remains dominant, the share nevertheless declined to 53% (2011) from 65% (1991). More than 72% of intra-state female migration in 2011 is for marriage purpose, but it is significantly less than the 1991 census (82.3%). Similarly, in the 2011 census, the share of economic reasons for male migration also came down to 10.8% in 2011 from 19.5% in 1991. Although, there is a decline in the share of economic reasons for male migration over two decades, but the size had increased phenomenally between 1991 (2.9 million) to 2011 (8.1 million). The state population also grew at a very slow pace during the last two decades at an annual rate of 1.5% (1991-2001) and 1.2% (2001-2011).

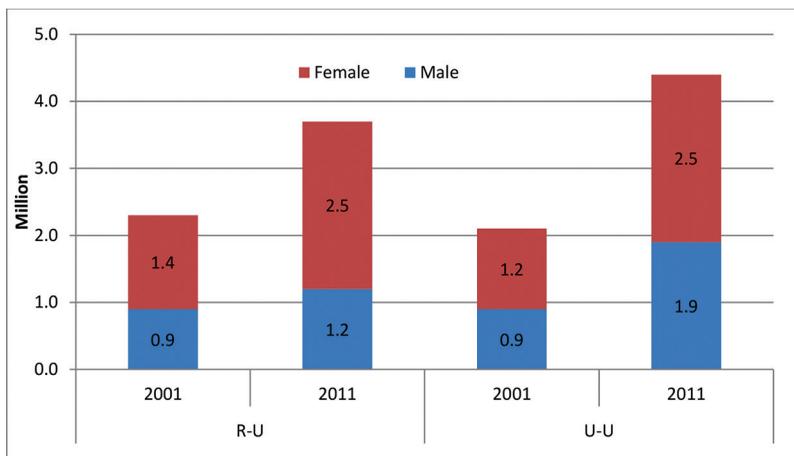
Table 1 Intra-state migration in West Bengal by reasons and sex over two decades (%)

Reasons for migration	1991			2001			2011		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Work/employment	5.2	19.5	1.1	4.5	15.5	0.9	3.6	10.8	0.8
Business	0.9	3.4	0.2	0.9	3.0	0.2	0.8	2.5	0.2
Education	1.4	4.3	0.5	0.7	2.1	0.2	0.5	1.1	0.2

Reasons for migration	1991			2001			2011		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Marriage	65.0	4.7	82.3	57.7	3.1	75.4	53.4	3.8	72.7
Moved with household	12.7	31.1	7.4	11.2	21.3	7.9	10.4	19.1	7.0
Others*	14.9	37.0	8.5	25.1	55.1	15.3	31.3	62.7	19.1
Total	100 (13.1)	100 (2.9)	100 (10.2)	100 (20.1)	100 (4.9)	100 (15.1)	100 (29.1)	100 (8.1)	100 (20.9)

Sources: Computed by author from census of India, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Note: * Figure in parenthesis is in million; Information on 'moved after birth' in 2001& 2011 and in 1991 'Natural calamities like drought, floods, etc.' census added with 'others' to compare the data.



Source: Census of India, ORGI.

Figure 2 Intra-state migration in West Bengal by streams

Rural and Urban dimensions of intra-state migration

In a developing country like India where the majority of the population lives in rural areas and intra-state migration is highly dominated by the female for marriage related reasons rural to rural migration is the dominant one (Ansary, 2018). And the state of West Bengal is no exception. However, migration to urban centres either from rural (R-U) or from urban (U-U) area is mainly for economic reasons (Keshri and Bhagat 2013; Bhagat 2018). In West Bengal, the size of R-U migration stream increased to 3.7 million in 2011 census up from 2.3 million in 2001 census whilst U-U migration doubled during the same time period from 2.2 million in 2001 to 4.4 million in 2011. Further, as it can be inferred from Figure 2, the size of male U-U migrants almost doubled i.e., to 1.9 million in 2011 from 0.9 million in 2001. However, R-U migration increased marginally i.e., to 1.2 million from 0.9 million in the same period.

Table 2 Intra-state migration in West Bengal by streams reasons and sex over two decades (%)

Reasons for migration	R-U						U-U					
	2001			2011			2001			2011		
	Total	Male	Female									
Work/employment	16.6	37.7	3.3	11.4	29.6	2.3	8.7	17.7	1.8	6.9	13.6	1.7
Business	2.3	5.6	0.3	2.1	5.6	0.4	1.7	3.5	0.3	1.7	3.3	0.5
Education	2.0	4.2	0.7	1.5	3.2	0.7	1.1	1.8	0.5	0.8	1.2	0.5
Marriage	39.4	1.3	63.3	46.7	2.9	68.6	27.1	0.8	47.4	25.9	1.4	45.0
Moved after birth	3.6	5.7	2.3	4.7	8.6	2.7	12.7	17.4	9.2	12.2	16.4	8.9
Moved with household	22.0	25.6	19.8	19.2	27.2	15.1	29.5	32.9	27.0	25.1	29.2	21.9
Others	14.0	20.0	10.3	14.5	22.9	10.2	19.1	25.9	13.9	27.4	34.8	21.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	(2.2)	(0.9)	(1.4)	(3.7)	(1.2)	(2.5)	(2.2)	(0.9)	(1.2)	(4.4)	(1.9)	(2.5)

Sources: Computed by author from census of India, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Note: * Figure in parenthesis is in millions; Information on 'moved after birth' in 2001 & 2011 and in 1991 'Natural calamities like drought, floods, etc.' census added with 'others' to compare the data.

So, over the time intra-state migration is replacing the inter-state migration in West Bengal. In other words, because of a significant reduction in the rate of job creation in West Bengal inter-state migrants were discouraged from entering the state. Additionally, limited job availability in the state pushed native residents to move to other states.

During two decades from 1991 to 2011, employment/work-related intra-state migration, i.e., movement from one district to another within West Bengal increased but inter-state migration from other states experienced a decline. It is well established that inter-state migration to West Bengal for economic reasons and more so for work/employment is dominated by the male migrants. In the 1991 census, 30% of the total inter-state male migration in West Bengal was for work/employment purpose. But this figure decreased to around 20% in the 2011 census, a total of ten percentage point fall. In the 2001 census, there was a perceptible decline of 2 percentage point. A similar pattern is noticed among male migrants; a declined of around 10 percentage point over the last two decades. Thus, increased intra-state migration in West Bengal over the two decades led to the emergence of new urban centres within West Bengal.

The analysis of in-migration (intra-state and Inter-state) at the city level in West Bengal indicated that migration is mostly Kolkata centric which accommodated around 70% of the total inter-state migrants (15.07 lakhs) and more than 63% of the total intra-state migrants (66.06 lakhs) in the 2011 census. Kolkata was followed by the cities like Asansol, Siliguri and Durgapur. So, Kolkata's ability in absorbing migrants has decayed over time while alternative urban centres within West Bengal have failed to attract migrants. The relative share of remaining urban centres in absorbing migrants in the last decade (2001-2011) declined. Interestingly, over the decade total size of intra-state migrants more than doubled 66.06 lakhs in 2011 and 30.3 lakhs in 2001. However, the corresponding figure for

inter-state migration marginally declined 15.07 lakhs in 2011 and 15.64 lakhs in 2001. However, new emerging urban centres, particularly in southern India, sucked the pressure of inter-state migrants on Kolkata. Thus, the migration wave, which was east-bound in the 20th century became south-bound in the 21st century (Tumbe 2018).

Inter-state migration dynamics in west Bengal

Following the adoption of new economic policy reforms in 1991, inter-state mobility increased considerably (Bhagat 2009; Ansary 2018) albeit with lower growth during the decade between 2001-2011 census. Notably, between 2001 and 2011, new destination states have started to emerge. During 1990s destination states were mainly Punjab Haryana offering opportunities to migrants in agricultural wage work and Mumbai and Delhi for non-farm low skilled manual jobs. During the decade of 2000s, we see that a new set of states have started to emerge as destinations for migrant workers. Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Gujarat are among prominent new destination states. The possible explanation behind the emergence of new destination states may be the increased public sector infrastructure investments and creation of job opportunities by industries and businesses in states like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Gujarat (Ghani et. al. 2011). West Bengal was the traditional destination to the migrants from eastern and northeastern India. In 2001 census the state was 4th most favoured destination to inter-state migrants amounting to 24.6 lakh migrants. But in the 2011 census the state ranked 10th with 23.8 lakh inter-state migrants. E.G. Ravenstein (1885) categorically mentioned that the volume of migration is inversely related to distance. This law of migration is still aptly applicable to the study of migration patterns. In West Bengal out of total inter-state migrants, 75% came from three states (Bihar Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh). From adjoining state of Bihar more than 11 lakh (46%) migrants entered West Bengal followed by Jharkhand (more than 19%) another neighboring state. A considerable number of migrants came from other states such as Assam, Odisha, and Rajasthan.

Interestingly, the percentage share of all these states declined in 2011 in comparison to 2001, except for the state of Assam. Table 3 illustrates that over the two decades, the share of inter-state migration for 'employment' related reason in the total inter-state migration declined including for males. However, the share of 'marriage' related inter-state migration in the total migration in West Bengal is increased more than eight percentage points (2001-2011) and four percentage points (1991-2011). Further share of inter-state migration for 'business and education' related reasons declined over the decades.

Table 3 Inter-state in-migration in West Bengal by reasons and sex over two decades (%)

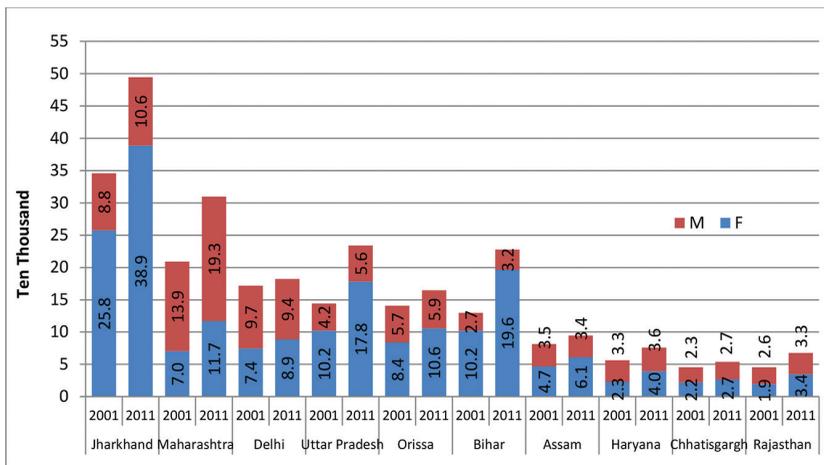
Reasons for migration	1991			2001			2011		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Work/ Employment	29.9	50.4	5.3	27.7	47.4	4.4	19.7	39.6	2.8
Business	5.0	8.5	0.7	4.0	7.0	0.5	3.5	7.0	0.6
Education	2.2	3.1	1.0	1.1	1.6	0.4	0.9	1.4	0.4
Marriage	28.5	2.1	60.3	24.4	1.1	52.0	32.5	2.2	58.2

Reasons for migration	1991			2001			2011		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Moved with household	20.7	19.2	22.5	23.2	20.0	27.1	22.6	23.5	21.8
Others*	13.2	16.1	9.8	17.3	20.3	13.8	20.8	26.4	16.1
Total	100 (2.01)	100 (1.09)	100 (0.91)	100 (2.46)	100 (1.33)	100 (1.13)	100 (2.38)	100 (1.09)	100 (1.29)

Sources: Computed by author from census of India, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Note: * Figure in parenthesis is in million; Reasons like 'moved after birth' in 2001& 2011 and in 1991 'Natural calamities like drought, floods, etc.' added with 'others' to compare the data.

In case of out-migration from the state, the size increased to 24 lakhs (2011 census) from 16.8 lakhs (2001), a growth of 42.5% over the decade. Further out-migration rate¹ from the state increased to 2.6% in 2011 from 2.1% in 2001 with a registered annual growth rate around 3%. But the in-migration rate decreased to 2.6% in 2011 from 3.1% in 2001. Although new destinations emerged, traditional destinations like Jharkhand, Maharashtra and NCT Delhi accounted for the majority of the Bengali migrants. In 2001 census the north Indian states like Uttar Pradesh (9.7%), NCT of Delhi (7.6%) Haryana (3.2%) Rajasthan (2.8%) and Punjab (2%) were the favourable destination states for Bengali migrants. In 2011 census Uttar Pradesh (Noida and Faridabad), Haryana (Gurgaon) and Karnataka (Bangalore) emerged as favourable destinations. However, the relative importance of these states reduced between 2001 to 2011 census. In the states like Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha there is a steep increase of female migrants and volume is also higher than the male migrants mainly for marriage related reasons. On the other hand, the volume of male migrants in the states like Maharashtra and Delhi is much higher. Notably, in the case of Delhi, the volume of male migrants, even though it remains high, has decreased marginally over the decade (Figure 3).



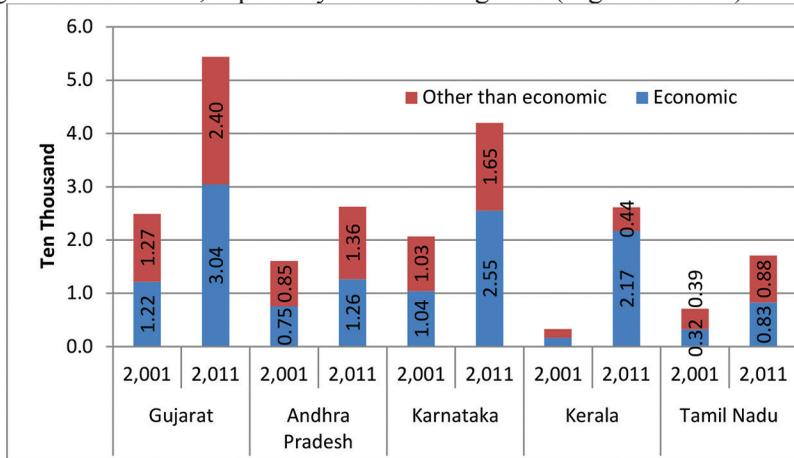
Source: Census of India, ORGI.

Figure 3 Top ten destination states for Bengali migrants

¹ In or out Migration rate is calculated as share of persons within working age population migrating in out. Following formula

$$\text{in(out) - migration rate} = \frac{\text{Total in(out)-migration}}{\text{Total Population}} \times 100$$

In 2011 census the western states (Gujarat and Maharashtra) along with southern states (Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) emerged as destinations for the migrants from West Bengal as the number of migrants to these states more than doubled. Although their volume is low compared to top ten destinations. Still, there is a rapid growth of migration from West Bengal to these states, especially for male migrants (Figure 3 and 4).



Source: Census of India, ORGI.

Figure 4 Top 5 new destination states for Bengali male migrants

In the 2001 census, only 40 thousand Bengali migrants entered Gujarat, but the figure increased to 89 thousand in 2011 census, a growth of 120%. The southern states experienced a phenomenal increase in the number of migrants from West Bengal. Growth of Bengali migrants to these states are much higher than the rest of India. Over the decade, i.e., between 2001 and 2011, Kerala recorded close to fivefold growth, followed by Tamil Nadu (138%). For male migration also, the state of Kerala is at the top with seven-fold increment between 2001 and 2011. Recent micro-level studies conducted in districts like Maldah, Murshidabad and South 24 Parganas of West Bengal indicate increased tendency of movement of male migrants towards Tamil Nadu, Kerala or Gujarat for high paying non-farm jobs (Mistri 2013, Reja 2018 and Ansary 2019).

The trend of female migrants from the state of West Bengal is, however, slightly different. Growth of female inter-state migration was highest for the state Jammu & Kashmir, i.e., 197% or two-fold followed by the south Indian states (Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala).

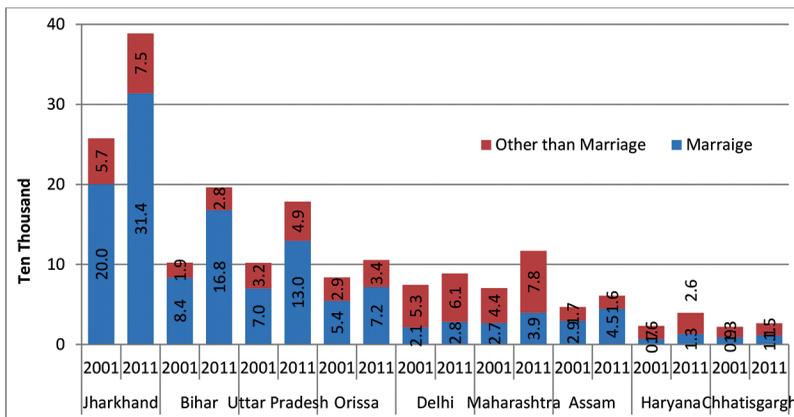
Table 4 Top five growth rate (2001 to 2011) of Bengali migrants by destination states (%)

States	Total	States	Male	States	Female
Kerala	474	Kerala	697	Jammu & Kashmir	197
Tamil Nadu	138	Tamil Nadu	140	Karnataka	143
Gujarat	121	Gujarat	118	Tamil Nadu	135
Karnataka	116	Karnataka	103	Gujarat	126
Jammu & Kashmir	82	Andhra Pradesh	63	Kerala	113

Source: Computed by authors from the Census of India 2001 and 2011, ORGI.

Although currently, the absolute size of Bengali migrants is much higher in NCT of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Punjab, however, with current trends in migration from West Bengal, Southern and Western states will become the hotspot of Bengali migrants. Availability of diversified job opportunities is more in industrialised southern states than the agriculturally developed northern Indian states such as Punjab, Haryana and western UP. Here Ravenstein’s (1885) theory that the volume of migration increases with the diversification of the economy and improvements in transport and communication facilities becomes relevant in rationalising the shift of Bengali migrants towards the western and southern states.

Figure 5 indicates that overall inter-state migration from the state of West Bengal to neighbouring states or states in north India is dominated by the female migrants, which is mostly marriage-related. The skewed child sex ratio since two decades and ever-increasing demand for women at marriageable age in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan act as the pull factor of female interstate migrants irrespective of their religion, caste, language and social status. The study of Kaur (2004 and 2012) observed that women of marriageable ages were trafficked and sold in many districts of Uttar Pradesh whose parental home is either in the eastern states of India or Bangladesh.



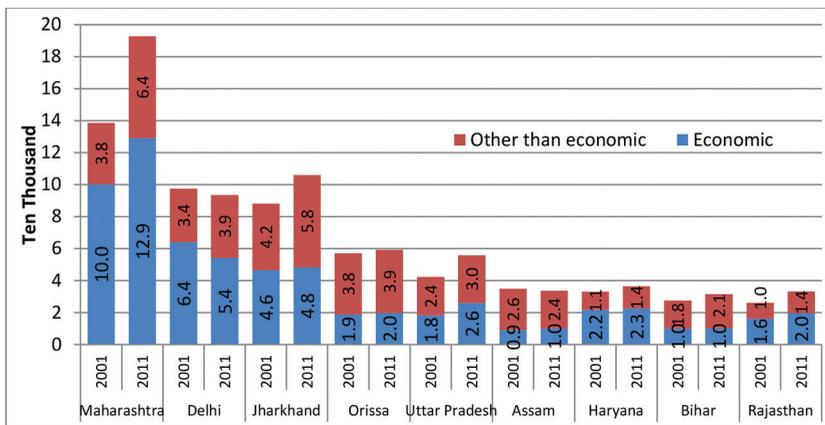
Source: Census of India, ORGI.

Figure 5 Top 10 destination states for Bengali female migrants by reasons

With time North Indian states (Punjab, Haryana and western UP) are becoming less favourable to the Bengali male migrants (Figure 6). The intercensal growth rate of Bengali male out-migration for employment in these states dropped. One of the possible reason may be that these states mainly provide jobs in agricultural sectors which has low wage rate, is seasonal and is less attractive to the young population (15-34 years). During the 1960s the policy of green revolution was concentrated in Punjab, Haryana and western UP exclusively for food grain production. Thus central and eastern India has remained mostly unaffected by the green revolution for long, which has widened the regional gap in agricultural development. This situation pushes distressed farmers and landless labourers from central and eastern India for seasonal or temporary migration for their livelihoods (De Haan 2002; Rogaly and Rafique 2003; Deshingkar and Start 2003; Roy 2007; Breman 2010;

Pattenden 2016). Now the agrarian crisis in India is at its peak to which Punjab, Haryana and western UP where the green revolution took place in the 1960s are no exception (Reddy and Mishra 2010; Vakulabharanam and Motiram 2011).

Squeeze on farmers' incomes due to reduction of input subsidies in the wake of economic reforms and increased wage rate led to the increased cost of cultivation. While this worked as a push factor, inception of special economic zones (SEZ) and increased industrial capacity as a result of liberalisation continues to work as a pull factor for migrants (Rao and Vakulabharanam 2018). As a result of this, a large numbers migrants seek employment outside their conventional industry and destinations, i.e. they are moving away from agriculture and green revolution zones.

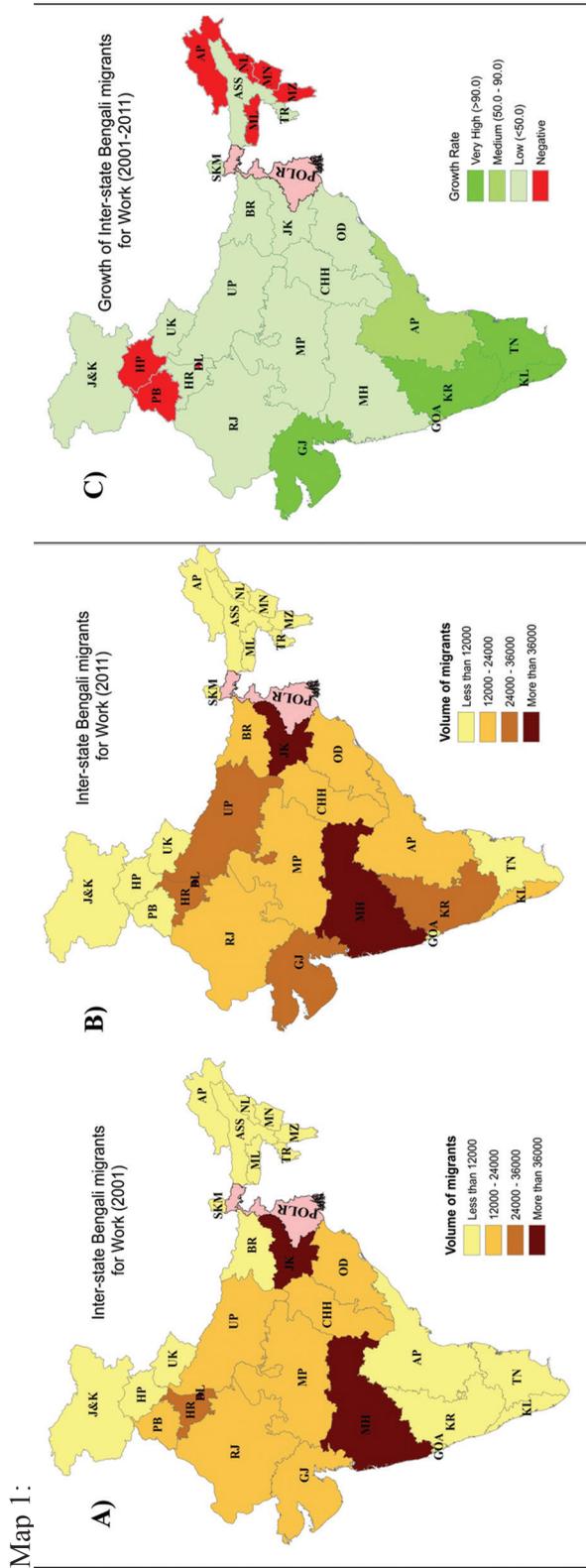


Source: Census of India, ORGI.

Figure 6 Destination states for Bengali male migrants by reasons

Although the current absolute size of total male out-migrants in southern states is lower than the traditional destination states such as Maharashtra and Delhi, these states, given the trend, may supersede conventional destinations for Bengali migrants in next round of census. Instead of entering in Mumbai, a growing number of Bengalis have started to choose Gujarat as it is emerging as significant merchandise and industrial hubs. Migrant workers tend to concentrate in the diamond cutting industry in (Surat), textile (Ahmedabad), Gems and Jewellery (Rajkot) and petrochemical industries (Baroda). About 80% of workers in Surat's diamond cutting industry and Ahmadabad's textile industry are inter-state migrant (Hirway et al. 2014).

Most of the megacities in India (Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata) are at their saturation point as far as unskilled/semiskilled employment opportunities are concerned which discourages new migrants from entering into these cities. Pulling power of conventional urban centres is on the decline due to reduced capacity in jobs creation, high living cost, exclusionary urbanisation and increasing trend of sub-nationalism. As a result of this inter-state migrants have started to choose urban centres in southern India instead of Mumbai and Delhi. Between 2001 to 2011 census NCT of Delhi recorded negative growth (-15.4%) and Maharashtra a slower growth (28.8%) of Bengali male migrants than 1991 to 2001 census -1% NCT of Delhi for and 39% for Maharashtra. Figure 7 illustrates this pattern over the two census period.



Increasing Sub-nationalism and changing migrant destination

Growing sub-nationalism in north-western states of India is at least partially responsible for pushing east Indian migrants to southern states. The incidents like brutal murder of Bengali migrant labour in Rajasthan and Jammu Kashmir (News 18, December 15, 2017 and The Hindu 30th October, 2019) pushed a large number of Bengali migrants to return back. Similarly, disproportionate violent response to a rape case in Gujarat compelled thousands of Hindi-speaking migrant workers to leave Gujarat (The Hindu, October 06, 2018). As a result of the organised political movement in the name 'Sons of the soil' which started in 1966 in Maharashtra has tended to increase the vulnerability of non-Marathi speaking workers in urban centres in the state. Thus, migrant workers are the most vulnerable section of the population without job and security of life as they keep changing their destinations continuously over their life course to earn livelihoods.

In the wake of rising sub-nationalism in the economically advanced northwestern region, southern states are performing as the dual engine for pulling migrants. On the one hand, these states experience significant emigration into the gulf countries, and on the other hand, they emerged as new industrial hubs. In Kerala Kozhikode, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Aluva, Alappuzha, and Malappuram districts reported a higher percentage of emigrants working in Gulf countries (Rajan 2011; Rajan and Zachariah 2013 and Reja and Das 2018). So, backward linkage of migration or replacement migration in Kerala and Tamil Nadu leads to the development of new migration stream from East (West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha) and Northeast (Assam and Manipur) (Kumar 2011). Further, due to increasing number of elderly persons (60+) in left-behind families increased demand for domestic and care-giving services as an additional pull factor for migrants towards the South (Rajan and Zachariah 2011). It is expected that the elderly population in Kerala will be 8.93 million by 2051 (UNDP 2009).

After the economic reforms in the 1990s and SEZ policy in 2000s, service sector which mostly concentrated in urban centres of southern India began to contribute the lion's share of GDP. Besley and Burgess (2002) in their study also reported greater labour market flexibility in the states of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Because of the service revolution in Bengaluru (Karnataka) Chennai (Tamil Nadu) and Hyderabad (AP) for every new job in the information technology sector created additional four jobs in the economy (Ghani and Kharas 2010). Thus, unskilled workers from industrially backward or less developed regions started moving into such urban centres. There is also evidence of a strong association between services sector growth, internal rural-urban migration and poverty reduction (in rural and urban area) in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu (Ghani and Kharas 2010). Bengali migrants moving to the southern states were also widely reported in popular media. For example, the *Business standard* article (20th January, 2019) called '*Kerala, a 'Dubai' for Bengali migrants*' where it reported sizeable appearance of Bengali migrants to fill the labour gap. They usually work for construction sites, petrol pumps, hotels, plantation, tea estates, vocational work and even paddy fields (Reja and Das 2016). Despite differences in language, food and culture Bengali migrants found acceptability because of inclusive and secular values prevailing in these states (Thorat and Joshi 2015).

For Example, Kerala is the first state in the country to enact a social security scheme for migrant workers (Business Line 24th January 2018). The state has initiated programmes for so that migrant families have access to food through, free education for children, health facilities and affordable dwellings. In the wake of Corona virus outbreak across the states in India, Kerala is the first state to come forward to disseminate information (distributing brochures, leaflets and short videos) on this epidemic in multiple languages and trained many migrant workers by the National Health Mission (NHM) to disseminate COVID-19-related information among the migrant community in the state (23rd March, 2020 The Hindu News Paper). The state also started '*Athithi Devo Bhava*' campaign aimed at the well-being of migrants. The state has opened 4,603 relief camps to house migrant labourers, officially called them as guest workers by CM of the state.

Remaining South Indian States also initiatives to look after migrant labourers stuck in respective states. In Tamil Nadu 178 active relief camps and shelters are operating to help migrant workers (7th April, 2020, The Hindu Newspaper). The state also announced for the proper food and accommodation of migrant workers from other countries. Karnataka state government established 200 relief camps in various districts for migrant workers and developed an app 'Dasoha 2020' to feed families of migrant labourers (4th April, 2020, The Hindu Newspaper). The Andhra Pradesh and Telangana government provided food, clothes, beds and other facilities to the migrant workers in many camps across the districts and instructed for maintaining proper hygiene and social distance. Most important leaders from these states made statement to assure that the basic needs of migrant workers will be looked after as they lost their employment. Such announcements were missing in northern Indian states which caused panic among migrant workers.

In this humanitarian crisis, different initiatives taken by the head of these states to protect the migrant communities along with its population sends a message of inclusiveness and builds confidence/sense of security among the community.

In summary state of West Bengal is not only less attractive for inter-state migrants but is failing to create enough jobs for it's own working-age population. The spatial patterning of development in West Bengal is concentrated in and around Kolkata, leaving a significant part of the Bengal underdeveloped. Although, the western part of the state (Bardhaman, Durgapur and Asansol) is a traditional industrial hub which provided jobs but has reached its saturation level. On the other hand, the state is also experiencing working-age bulge. Due to limited industrial growth in the state, people are moving out to other states even if states are far away. Notably, to the southern states which were absent from Bengali migrants' map one decade ago. It is high time that the West Bengal devises a sustainable and regionally balanced industrial policy strategy to halt the exodus of its working population. Ironically, there is no data with the West Bengal government on the actual number of inter-state out migrants who are helping the state economy through remittances. Also, migrants are the most vulnerable section of the population, which is on the rise in West Bengal. The predicament of migrants during the ongoing Corona pandemic related lockdown has sufficient demonstrated that the state has no strategy in place to protect its migrant population from various vulnerabilities that they face. If any social, economic and demographic problem happens, the migrant community is first to get affected.

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