

URBAN INDIA



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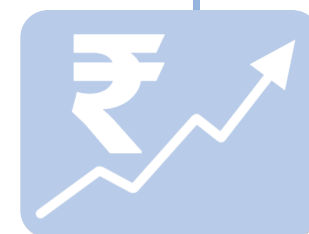


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Special Issue on Migration

Overview of Migration
Seasonal Migration
Gendered Migration
Migrant Child Labour
Job Search and Labour Market Outcomes
Migration and Conflict
Legal Aspects of Migration
Book Reviews
Workshops





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- Full citation for all references and sources must be provided.
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- Authors are requested to provide full details for correspondence (postal and email address).

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MIGRATION IN THE SLUMS OF KOLKATA: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The concept of migration is not new to social science researchers. Conventional models describe migrants from 'push-pull' perspectives. However, they fail to take into account the impact of social processes affecting migration, especially issues related to women who largely remain underrepresented in studies related to migration or the labour market. Despite the fact that women cite marriage/family movement as the main reason for migration, it is important to recognise that they were workers at the source area and are potential workers in the destination as well. Drawing sample from a slum in Kolkata, this paper contests the overall role of women as tied movers. Further, the paper discusses the background profile of migrants and gives an account of gendered division of the migrants' labour market participation, types of work and related issues.

Migration¹: A Highly Gendered Phenomenon

Overall, South Asian women have been studied primarily in reference with marriage migration whereby women typically move out from their native places post-marriage, as most of the marriages are exogamous in nature (Kaur, 2004). Since most of migration is linked with marriage-related moves, women migrants are assumed not to have much social or economic impact on either places of origin or destination. As a consequence, gender related variations in the causes, consequences, and patterns of migration have not

¹ In absence of continuous recording of the details of people's movement, estimates of in and out migration are obtained by asking questions in population census or in sample surveys. In India, information on migration is generally obtained from two major sources - Census of India and National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). Census defines migrants from two perspectives: place of birth and place of last residence. NSSO defines it from the perspective of 'last usual place of residence'. The last usual place of residence is where a person has stayed continuously for six months prior to relocating the present place where s/he is enumerated.



been considered significant enough to warrant specific analysis. Therefore, married women are routinely excluded from the reputable migration studies (Parliwala and Uberoi, 2008).

It is now a growing trend for women to move alone to the city for work purposes, un accompanied by male members. 'Autonomous' migration generally implies women's solo movement, particularly a situation in which the migration decision rests with the individual. In case of women this concept is generally obscure as their families usually take migration decisions on their behalf (Lipszyc, 2004). This is mainly because within a household, gender intersects with different axes of identity such as age, marital status, etc., which creates conditions that directly or indirectly influence their mobility (Chant, 1998). Autonomous migration of women is most often associated with movement as labourers in paid work, challenging their conventional image within the household domain. But, how far this movement can be termed as 'autonomous' remains a question. Women may have taken these decisions on their own to better their families' condition, but these decisions may actually be forced by circumstances (Arya and Roy, 2006; Karlekar, 1995).

The most common problem associated with tied migrants² is their underestimation as workers. This is mainly because women do not perceive their economic roles and because of their nature of work as marginal or part time workers, their work status gets relegated. Social and cultural norms and prevailing prejudices in the country restrict women's work outside the household domain (Raju, 2006). In recent literature, female migration is linked to gender specific patterns of labour demand in the cities. The increased participation of educated women in public sphere outside the house necessitated the recruitment of domestic help who can take care of both the children as well as that of the old people. Since domestic work offer slow wages and is also associated with low status, local women have opted out of it and these jobs are largely filled up by migrant women (Gulati, 1997).

Aims and Objectives

The present study looks at the gendered pattern of migration in Kolkata. As women's labour market participation is hindered by domestic responsibilities,

²Generally understood as those who move as a consequence of a family's migration.



they are mainly home-based workers, either paid or unpaid. Moreover, due to limited educational and skill attainments, women are concentrated in certain occupations typically designated as 'feminine'. Within this backdrop, the paper puts forth the following objectives:

- Who are these migrants and what their source areas are?
- What are the reasons of migration and how does social networking facilitate it?
- How far is women's migration associational or autonomous?
- How does education and skill attainment prior to and post migration impact the access of women to labour market opportunities?

Although the focus is on women, the study incorporates both men and women to pick out the gendered differences in the migration pattern.

Methodology

According to NSSO 2007-2008, about 35 percent of urban population in India are migrants. The figure for urban West Bengal (35 percent) matched closely with the national average. Within West Bengal, Kolkata Urban Agglomeration (KUA) and more precisely Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) is the main urban centre in the state and acts as a primate city in the whole of the eastern region. Since the present study focuses on urban migrants, Kolkata is chosen as the area for field survey. In Kolkata, 22 percent of the city's population is migrants, of which 24 percent are males and 20 percent are females (Census of India, 2011). Since KMC is entirely urban, there are no rural to urban migration within the district and inter-state migration is significant (46.4 percent).

Since the present study encompasses migrants from lower income group, slum population is taken as a proxy. Out of the total 141 wards in KMC, 107 wards have slums. The average slum population for the city as a whole is 33 percent. Out of the total 107 wards with slum population, 6 wards have more than 90 percent of its population residing in slums. As heterogeneity among the migrants (source region, social and religious group etc.) was a pre-requisite for the study, Ward 29 was selected which satisfies the conditions. About 99 percent population of this ward resides in the slums and contains 3 percent of the entire slum population of Kolkata (Census of India, 2011).



Overall 7 slum clusters were identified. Out of these, a single slum (Canal East Road Slum) is selected. A total of 1150 households were enumerated through a door-to-door survey in Canal East Road slum. Out of these, 385 were migrant households, i.e. households where at least one of the members is a migrant in the 15-59 age group were selected. To be deemed as a migrant, the respondent should have had a different place of origin (either by birth place or by place of last residence) and the person should have stayed in Kolkata for a maximum period of at least 25 years. Finally, based on the willingness of the respondents to participate in the survey, a total of 380 migrant households were selected. These households contained 432 migrants: 202 men and 230 women. A structured questionnaire consisting of household and individual schedule has been used to interview the target group³.

Based on field survey, the migrants are divided into following three types:

Men Moved Alone in the City: Comprises large part of men migrants (75 percent of all men migrants). Households of such persons are generally devoid any women members. These men generally move to and fro between Kolkata and their source areas.

Autonomous Women Migrants: Although secondary sources of data do not give a direct measurement of 'autonomous' migrants, a number of conditions have been applied to calculate some proxy variables. Out of the total women migrants aged 15-59 years, those who are never married, widowed and divorced/separated and who consider themselves to be the head of the household and moved for employment/educational purposes are considered to be autonomous migrants⁴. Keeping these conditions, only 0.7

³ Structured questionnaire consist of three parts: household schedule (social and religious groups; land possessed in the origin areas; household assets owned in the destination etc); Individual schedule (age, sex, marital status, educational standard, work details of all the household members) and migration schedule (source areas, pre-migration work status; perceived difference in both the places of origin and destination, expectations related with migration, expansion of social space and other related issues).

⁴ To arrive at the tentative estimate of autonomous migrants, Shanti (2006) have used the proxy variables of unmarried; widowed and divorced/separated women and the head of the household (where women report themselves as household head). In the present study, a slight variation is taken into account and all those women who were unmarried, widowed and divorced separated and moved for employment and educational purposes and report themselves as household head were considered as autonomous migrants. This is mainly done because even a considerable proportion of unmarried/widowed/divorced/separated women have moved with family which cannot be truly described as autonomous migration.



percent women migrated in urban West Bengal. Such a macro picture is reflected in the present survey: only 7 women migrants (3 percent of all women migrants) can be considered as 'autonomous' migrants. They have moved into the city with children.

Family Migrants: This particular category constitutes both men and women who have families in the city. Men in this category comprise 25 percent of all men migrants. The corresponding figure for women is 97 percent. They comprise those women who were married to the natives of Kolkata. Besides these, there are instances of family migration – entire family moved together; men settled first in the city, later joined by wife with/without children after staying for sometime in the village.

The present study is divided into 4 sections. The first section deals with brief introduction on migration, objectives, methodology and concepts used in the study. The second section links the macro and micro picture and tries to situate the slum migrants (study area) with the poorest 25 percent of migrant population in urban West Bengal. The third section centres on the study area to deal with the specific objectives as pointed earlier. The fourth section sums up and concludes the study.

Comparative Analysis between Poor Migrants in Urban West Bengal and in the Study Area

In the absence of comparable data, the slum respondents of the study area are compared with the corresponding population in the state of West Bengal. The similarities/differences are given in Table 1.

Age of the Migrants

In the present study, mean ages of the migrants are computed and are compared accordingly. Table 1 reveals that men migrants in the study area belong to comparatively younger ages. Women on the contrary do not exhibit any such variation. Although outside the purview of the secondary data, the primary data reveals that the mean age of 75 percent of men who moved alone in the city is much lower (32 years). Their presence might have reduced the overall ages of the men migrants. The remaining 25 percent of the men are family migrants and are comparatively older (average age 40 years).



Marital Status

More than 80 percent of men and women are married. Among the women, higher percentage of married women is present in the slum as compared to urban West Bengal. Apart from marriage migration, migration due to widowhood is quite common among women. The study exhibits that relatively higher proportions of widowed/divorced/separated women are present in the study area as compared to urban West Bengal. To contextualize, how far livelihood options compel these women to seek work at distant places, they are further cross-classified by reasons of migration. About, 31 percent of the widowed/deserted women in the surveyed area have moved for work purposes as compared to only 4 percent in urban West Bengal. It is perhaps the anonymity and absence of restricted behavioural code in Kolkata that provide more employment opportunities to these women as compared to West Bengal. Proportion of unmarried men moving to West Bengal and Kolkata is much higher as compared to their women counterparts. Very few unmarried women have migrated to the study area.

Educational Standard Attained

It is interesting to note that while in urban West Bengal, a large proportion of poor men are illiterate, illiteracy is much lower among men in the slum population. Most of them are educated up to upper primary. However, level of illiteracy among the women does not differ much across two places under consideration. Most of the women migrants in the slum have attained education up to upper primary. One may infer that migration into large cities requires some higher educational attainment. On the contrary, small-sized urban centres can offer job even to the illiterates (Dubey, Jones and Sen, 2004).

Religious Groups

In urban West Bengal, the proportion of Hindu men and women are almost equal. The Hindu women are mainly associational migrants (92 percent report having moved for marriage purposes and for family reunion). But in the study area, Hindu women migrants are quite few. This lower representation in the slum can be explained by the male selective migration of Hindu men i.e., of the total men moved alone in the city, 87 percent are Hindus. Therefore, it can be posited that poor migrants cannot bring their families due to high



living cost and living space constraint in the city. In contrast, more than half of the women migrants in the slum are Muslims – who either moved as a part of family reunion or married to slum dwellers of Kolkata.

Caste Group

While the 'other castes' predominates in West Bengal, the Scheduled Caste is the dominant in the slum in the context of only male migrants. Migration is not only male selective, it is also selective in terms of caste and specific regions pertaining to certain pockets of the city. In this particular slum, the SC men represents the phenomenon of 'chain-migration' where by son took the position of the father/main earner of the family in the city. These men leave their families in the natal places. Moreover, they also continue the same occupation of their predecessors – large numbers of SC men are cobblers in the study area.

So far women are considered, both in West Bengal and in the study area, the 'other caste' category predominates.

Workers

Employment remains to be the prime motive for the migrants, especially when they are from poor economic background. Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) of men is almost universal, i.e., it does not differ in the city slums or in other urban areas of West Bengal. But, the proportion of women workers is substantially lower as compared to men. The women in the city have somewhat higher WPR as compared to their women counterparts in West Bengal. This is mainly attributed to their higher educational attainments. For example, out of the total workers, 50 percent of women in the slums are literate as against 30 percent in West Bengal.

Self-employment among the slum dwellers is much higher for both men and women. Women engaged in regular salaried jobs are slightly higher in the slum as compared to that in West Bengal probably because of relatively higher literacy rates: 57 percent of women in regular salaried job in the sample are literate as compared to 30 percent in West Bengal. In contrast, West Bengal seems to provide much greater employment opportunities in terms of casual work as compared to that of Kolkata.



Table 1: Demographic, Social, and Economic Profile of the Poor Migrants in Urban West Bengal and in the Study Area

	Poor Migrants in Urban West Bengal		Migrants in the Study Area*	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Age				
Mean Age	36.8	34.4	34	33.9
Marital Status				
Unmarried	16.0	2.6	19.3	0.8
Married	82.2	85.5	80.2	92.2
Widowed/Abandoned	1.8	11.9	0.5	7
Total	100	100	100	100
Educational Standard Attained				
Illiterate, Informal Education and Below Primary	61.4	61.1	30.7	57.4
Upper Primary	29.6	32.7	47.5	26.5
Secondary and Higher Secondary	7.4	5.3	19.8	14.8
Graduate	1.6	0.9	2	1.3
Total	100	100	100	100
Religious Groups				
Hindu	79.6	77.4	73.3	44.3
Muslim	19.8	21.9	26.7	55.7
Christian	0.6	0.7	0.0	0.0
Total	100	100	100	100
Social Groups				
Scheduled Tribe	2.1	2.1	0.5	0
Scheduled Caste	30.6	35.3	66.3	27
Other Backward Caste	3.5	3.8	5	13
Others	63.8	58.8	28.2	60
Total	100	100	100	100
Workforce Participation				
Workers	95.9	30.1	96.5	34.3
i) Self-employed	54.1	57.4	68.2	63.3
ii) Regular Salaried	11.2	30.9	7.7	35.4
iii) Wage Labourers	34.7	11.7	24.1	1.3
Total (i+ii+iii)	100	100	100	100

Source: Computed from Unit Level Data of NSSO, 64th Round, 2007-2008.

*Author's, 2010.



Slum Migrants in Kolkata: Evidences from Field Survey

The present study of the Kolkata Urban Agglomeration⁵ suggests that cities attract poorer migrants. As per the consumption classes the migration rate of the poor, particularly men, is more pronounced as compared to that of the rich men – 34 percent as compared to 28 percent respectively. The figures for women migrants across consumption classes do not vary as such. In case of in-migration of poor migrants in Kolkata, the main question posed is where these people head towards or where in the city do they work and find shelter? The slum is an obvious answer.

The Rural/Urban Background of the Migrants

The migrants in the surveyed area are mainly rural in their origin. Out of the total migrants, 81 percent are from rural background while the rest are from urban areas. Broadly, more men (91 percent) are from rural areas than women (73 percent). A detailed analysis of the data by different types of migrants reveal that men moving alone in the city are mostly drawn from rural areas (96 percent) as compared to those who moved with the family (76 percent). About 30 percent of the men who migrated alone are landless. Even if they possess land, nearly all of them are marginal farmers with landholding less than 1 hectare. Although a crude measure of poverty, more than half of them had Below Poverty Line Cards and about, 83 percent of them belong to SC. This suggested that, the migrants are not only rural, but also are marginalized in several aspects. The men who moved with the families seem to be slightly better off: 43 percent are marginal farmers; 35 percent of them had a BPL card, and most importantly about 70 percent of them belong to general caste.

Although men in urban-urban migration are few, roughly 30 percent of them are marginal land holders; 20 percent of them had BPL card while half of them belongs to other castes. As far as women migrants are considered (associational migrants), it can be said that about 23 percent of the rural women fall below poverty line as compared to 18 percent of the urban women.

⁵To discern the basic migration pattern by MPCE, a region wise analysis is carried out. Southern Plains Region of West Bengal is selected as a proxy of KUA which includes the urban areas of the districts of Kolkata, North and South 24 Parganas.



No major difference exists along the axis of caste as irrespective of rural/urban origin as most of the women belong to other castes. Similarly, the autonomous women migrants are mainly from other caste (57 percent) as compared SC (43 percent).

State/districts of Origin

Table 2 reveals that the city draws migrants from rural hinterlands of different states, especially along those who moved alone. The women migrants with families represent a slightly different picture. About one-fourth of women migrants are from the state itself, rest are inter-state migrants – drawn mainly from rural areas. This is mainly because some proportion of women will accompany their husbands contributing to their share in total rural to urban migration stream. At the same time, women also moved for marriage and were thus drawn from other areas too.

As far as the autonomous women migrants are considered, 5 out of 7 are from other urban centres of West Bengal while the rests are rural inter-state migrants.

Table 2: Streams of Migration and their Rural-Urban Location⁶

Streams of Migration	All Men	Women Women	Men Moved Alone	Men with Families	Women with Families
Intra-state Migration					
i) Rural	5.9	17.4	1.3	18.9	17.9
ii) Urban	0.5	9.6	0	1.9	7.6
Total Intra-State	6.4	27	1.3	20.8	25.6
Inter-state Migration					
iii) Rural	84.7	57	94.6	56.6	57.8
iv) Urban	8.9	16.1	4.1	22.6	16.6
Total Inter-state	93.6	73	98.7	79.2	74.4
Total (i+ii+iii+iv)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: *Author's, 2010.*

⁶ In the tables, figures are given for all men, all women (autonomous and associational taken together), men moved alone, men with families and women with families. The figures for autonomous women are only mentioned in the text as they are very few in numbers.



The district level analysis reveals that within West Bengal, migrants are mainly from adjoining regions in Kolkata or from those districts that forms a concentric circle around the city. None of the migrants had moved from far-off districts like Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, etc. Inter-state mobility comprises a large share of migrants to this area. Among the states, Bihar (74 percent) seems to be the main sending area followed by Uttar Pradesh (5.1 percent) and Jharkhand (2.1 percent). Very few migrants, especially men moved from Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and Maharashtra.

Role of Social Networking

It may be recalled that Bihar sends the largest contingent of migrants to Kolkata. Within Bihar, most of the migrants are from Jamui district, especially men (49 percent). The presence of known members in the city acts as a catalyst to draw more potential migrants from the areas of origin. In case of Jamui, for instance, 97 percent of the men reported the presence of known persons in the city. Most important among them are their fathers and immediate kin who constitute about 85 percent of the migrants' network. The rests constitute friends and other village members. The study also reveals that about 90 percent of those who succeeded their father or kin received support in terms of food, living arrangements, job search assistance and skill attainment. Most chain migrants moved to the city with the sole purpose of continuing their fathers' businesses as self-employed (75 percent) either as own account workers or as employers. The rest of them are wage labourers, working in same occupation similar to their predecessor.

For the autonomous women migrants, social networking forms an important component. Almost all of these women were supported by their immediate kin upon arrival in the city.

To sum up, it is observed that both men and autonomous women rely on the presence of family members. Although the poorer migrants originate from well-defined economically poor regions, existing kinship ties at the place of destination facilitate their movement. They undertake the move to those places where they had a priori knowledge and known members so that the passage and settlement in a new land can be easier.



Reasons of Migration

Overall, men are pulled towards the city, but difference exists among men who moved alone and those migrated with family. Both 'push' and 'pull' factors seem to operate equally for men who moved alone in the city while those who moved with the family migrate to the city only when they have better opportunities. Apart from being pushed or pulled towards Kolkata, other economic factors also operate - more importantly, where the migrants continue the same occupation of their predecessors. However, most of the men moving alone into the city continue the same occupation.

Table 3: Reasons of Migration⁷

Streams of Migration	All Men	Women Women	Men Moved Alone	Men with Families	Women with Families
Push Factors	23.8	0.0	28.9	9.4	0.0
Pull Factors	37.1	3.0	27.5	64.2	0.0
Other Employment Reasons	31.7	0.0	37.5	15.0	0.0
Social Reasons	0.0	94.4	0.0	0.0	97.4
Other Reasons	7.4	2.6	6.1	11.4	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's, 2010.

Although moving for work is negligible among women, it is observed all the 7 autonomous women moved to the city for work, especially in search of employment.

Contrary to autonomous women migrants, a large part of women have moved into the city as associational migrants. Their movement is mainly triggered by marriage and family reunion. For example, more than half of the women migrants have relocated themselves for marriage, where they have moved

⁷ Push factors: agricultural work is not remunerative, non-availability of non-farm employment, low wages, and poverty. Pull factors: search of work, to take up better job in the city, other employment reasons: business, continuity of occupation; social reason: marriage, family migration; others: educational, health and others.



immediately after marriage. The rest joined husband as a part of family strategy, after staying for sometime in the area of origin. The incidence of simple family reunion reveals diversity. Women are called upon from the village based on the needs and convenience of men counterparts such as arrangement of housing as well as to take care of their husbands in terms of food, cooking etc (Table 3).

Although it is observed that most of the women in the slum are associational migrants, the present study reveals that about 24 percent of associational women were workers before migration, which increased to 33 percent in post-migration period. That is, even if women move on account of marriage, they were earners in the place of origin and become potential earners in the destination. This clearly contests their role as tied movers.

The associational migrants are further segregated in a) who moved immediately after marriage and b) those who joined their husband in the city at a later stage after staying for some time in the origin area. The author recognises that the division of associational migrants into the two groups does not give a direct measure to assess and infer that the post-migration labour market participation of the associational women contests their role as tied movers. However, it does indicate different trajectories and opportunities available to these two groups of women. Table 4 shows that whether women moved for marriage or family reunion, their labour market participation do not differ in the pre-migration period, about 24 percent of each of these women were workers. However, the city offers varying opportunities to these women. Comparatively higher share of women moved for marriages are in workforce as compared to those who moved for family reunion after migration. The greater WPR of the women in the first category is attributed to their higher literacy rate as a whole. That is, higher literacy rate among the marriage-driven migrants enables them to find work in the city; it may thus be said that marriage becomes a means to explore labour market opportunities and also fulfil their own aspirations. Of all the women migrants with family engaged in work – most of them are self-employed as compared to those women move for marriages. Moreover, 37 percent of women migrated for family reunions are unpaid helpers as compared to only 17 percent moving for marriage. This makes the women who migrate for family reunion relatively more deprived than those who moved on account of marriage. For them perhaps, marriage is conceived as a means to move into large cities and to find employment. The discussion suggests that where the solo movement of



men is common, it is hard to find the same in the case of women. In contrast, most of the women's movement is associational. Yet, their migration cannot be truly described as passive. Irrespective of whether they move due to marriage or as family migrants, they enter labour market in the city (Table 4).

**Table 4: Comparative Analysis Between
Women Moved for Marriage and for Family Reunion**

Demographic and Economic Indicators	Moved for Marriage	Family Reunion
Mean Age	31.3	37.1
Literacy Rate	68.0	42.0
Pre-migration -WPR	24.0	23.8
Post-migration WPR	38.0	27.0
Post-migration Work Status		
a. Self-employed	66.0	71.0
b. Regular salaried	32.0	29.0
c. Casual labour	2.0	0.0
Total workers	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's, 2010

Decision-makers for Migration

In the present study, the migrants were asked as to who had taken the decision for them to move? Whether, it is the self, parents, kin members or others? Such a question was not asked to those women who had moved immediately after marriage for obvious reasons. However, women who moved on account of family reunion were included.

Table 5 exhibits that while most of the men decide their own move. There is a discrepancy among men who moved alone and with family. Parents mainly take the migration decision for men moving alone in the city, especially when they are young. In contrast, men with family decided their own move. No such relationship emerges between age and decision to migrate among women migrants.



Table 5: Migration Decision and Age at Migration

Decision Maker	All Men		All Women		Men Moved Alone		Men with Families		Women with Families	
	Percent of Migrants	Age at Migration	Percent of Migrants	Age at Migration	Percent of Migrants	Age at Migration	Percent of Migrants	Age at Migration	Percent of Migrants	Age at Migration
Self only	48.5	21.8	7.5	21.6	39.6	18.8	73.6	26.2	2.0	20.0
Parents only	38.1	16.1	0.9	20.0	47.7	16.2	11.3	15.0	1.0	20.0
Self and parents	4.5	19.3	0.9	45.0	4.7	16.6	3.8	29.0	0.0	-
Kin members	6.9	13.9	0.0	-	8.1	14.3	3.8	11.0	0.0	-
Husbands	0.0	-	74.8	25.3	0.0	-	0.0	-	80.0	25.3
Both the couples	2.0	29.3	15.9	23.2	0.0	-	7.5	29.3	17.0	23.2
Total	100	19.1	100	21.2	100	17.1	100	24.7	100.0	21.0

Source: Author's, 2010

NOTE: Age at the time of migration for first time migrants = (present age minus the years of stay in Kolkata).

Age at the time of migration for those who moved elsewhere prior to arriving at Kolkata = (present age minus period since leaving his/her origin area).

In most of the cases where women moved for family reunion, migration decisions were taken by their husbands. Only few migrants decided their own move. However, Muslim women experience substantial control by their husbands in terms of decision of migration as compared to those of Hindu women. Migration decisions for 79 percent of Muslim women are taken by their husband, as compared to only 28 percent in case of Hindu women.

As far as autonomous women are concerned, 6 out of 7 of them have taken their own decision excepting one respondent where the decision is jointly taken with the parents. These women, however, have moved into the city for employment purposes, majority of them had children with them as dependents and for them relocation is a survival strategy of the family, rather than a choice/option.

Workers in the Study Area

In the present study, respondents were asked about what did they do during the last year with reference to the time the survey was carried out? Those who reported that they had worked were further asked about their work status, exact nature of work etc. The women who reported their status as housewives were enquired whether they assisted their husband in any sort of work. This provided an estimate of unpaid family labour.



In this way the workers could be identified as having primary and secondary status. The main work in which the migrants are engaged for relatively longer time span in a year and devote longer hours is designated as primary work. Apart from the primary work, the respondents were further asked whether they have taken up other work that could be carried out simultaneously with the main work. Such work could be for a shorter time span, perhaps in lean seasons when there is less primary work available. These are the secondary workers. Overall, about 97 and 34 percent of men and women are workers in primary status respectively while the corresponding figures of men and women engaged in secondary work are 18 and 4 percent respectively.

Primary and Secondary Work

Taking the primary work into consideration, it is observed that men's WPR is much higher as compared to that of women. As argued, spatial mobility does enhance WPR – this observation holds true for both men and women. When each of the groups is seen separately, it is observed that in pre-migration stage, more than half of the men who moved alone in the city, were workers; about a third were attending education and one-tenth of them were into various other activities like neither seeking job, not attending educational institutes etc. However, almost all of them entered the labour market after shifting to the city. Those men who moved with the family reveal same characteristics.

As argued earlier, although fewer women cite employment as the reason for moving to the city, their post-migration work status contradicts the claim. That is, their actual labour market participation is high, contrary to their stated reason for migration. The present study confirms the fact: overall 3 percent women moved for work purposes whereas one-fourth were workers before migration which increased to more than one-third after relocating to the city. At a greater depth, 5 out of 7 autonomous women and one-thirds of the women who moved with families entered the labour market (Table 6).



Table 6: Workforce Participation in Pre and Post-Migration Period

Status of the Migrants	All Men		All Women		Men Moved Alone		Men with Families		Women with Families	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Workers	48.5	96.5	24.3	34.3	51.7	98	39.6	90.6	24.2	33.2
Attending Education	30.2	1.0	5.2	0.0	35.6	1.3	15.1	0.0	5.4	0.0
Seeking Work	5.9	0.5	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.7	17.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Attending Domestic Duties	0.0	0.0	70.0	65.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9	70.0	66.8
Others	15.3	2.0	0.4	0.0	10.7	0.0	28.3	7.5	0.4	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's, 2010

Only 18 percent men are workers are secondary status. Out of these men almost all of them moved alone in the city (89 percent), migrating mainly from rural areas where they were marginal farmers.

Work Status

Primary work status is classified into self-employed, regular salaried and wage labour. Self-employed includes own account workers, employers and unpaid labourers,⁸ regular salaried workers are those who are employed more or less permanently in any occupation and wage labourers includes persons who are irregularly placed in the labour market.

Table 7 shows that in the pre-migration period, self-employment emerged to be the main avenue of employment especially among the men who moved alone. Roughly one-third of men (both moved alone and with family) were wage labourers. Regular salaried workers are quite uncommon. Post-migration period exhibits a divergence of work status. Although self-employment continues to be the prime entry point for men, the emergence of employers suggests that these men were successful in setting up their own small business and also hire wage labourers, most often during peak seasons. Unpaid family labour is almost absent, indicating that men's labour is always paid especially when they migrate for work. Regular salaried work is negligible among men

⁸ Although, unpaid family work come under the purview of secondary work status, where the work is intermittently conducted. But a probe into the working hours of the unpaid family helps reveal that women contribute much longer time in helping their men counterparts. Due to this they were classified as primary workers.



who moved alone as compared to those who moved with families. In contrast, large number of men who moved alone are wage labourers. This suggests that when men become economically secure—attaining better and more permanent jobs and a reliable secure source of income—they could bring their families to the city and support them in urban settings.

So far as women's WPR is concerned, only two of the autonomous women were workers in the pre-migration period, one was self-employed while the other was wage labour.

A slight variation is observed among the women with families. More than half were self-employed – mainly as own account and unpaid family labour. Regular salaried jobs were quite uncommon among the women and a large proportion of them were wage labourers. Like men, women also experienced shift in work status after relocating to Kolkata.

Autonomous women migrants are mainly into regular salaried jobs (5 out of 7), while the women with families find entry as self-employed workers. Within the self-employment category, unpaid helpers seems to have increased and this suggests that poor women provide support and help to their husbands in lieu of (extra) hired hand so that families can reap maximum profit from their businesses.

Table 7: Pre and Post-Migration Work Status

Work Status Migrants	All Men		All Women		Men Moved Alone		Men with Families		Women with Families	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
i) Self-Employed										
a) own account worker/partnership/dependent sub contract workers	55.1	45.1	46.4	39.2	57.1	40.4	47.6	58.3	46.3	40.5
b) Employer	0.0	22.1	0.0	1.3	0.0	26.0	0.0	10.4	0.0	0.0
c) Unpaid Family Helper	4.1	1.0	10.7	22.8	5.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.1	22.8
Total (a+b+c)	59.2	68.2	57.1	63.3	62.3	66.4	47.6	68.7	57.4	63.3
ii) Regular Salaried	7.1	7.7	5.4	35.4	3.9	4.1	19.0	18.8	5.6	35.4
iii) Wage Labour	33.7	24.1	37.5	1.3	33.8	28.1	33.3	12.5	37.0	1.3
Total (i+ii+iii)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's, 2010



At the same time, regular salaried jobs also show a radical increase in post-migration period indicating that city provides more assured sort of employment. However, critical insights are necessary to find out exact avenues of employment of these women, engaged even in the most assured sort of job.

Interrelationship between Work Status and Location of Work Place

The emergence of self-employment as the main avenue of employment in urban area among women can probably be attributed to their reproductive and domestic role because of which women prefer to work within home or even if they work outside, they choose nearby places within the walking distance from home. Even otherwise, the poor cannot afford to travel longer distance because of the expenses involved in travelling (Mitra, 2004). On the contrary, regular salaried jobs are mainly taken outside the household vicinity.

About 90 percent of the self-employed women workers work from home as against 77 percent of men. Most of these self-employed home-based women workers are unpaid helpers to their husbands or 'dependent sub-contract workers' (also see, Chen et.al 1999). They get engaged in petty manufacturing and in other elementary occupations.

Certain occupations, engaging large number of men, are carried out within home and hence the division between 'private' and 'public' is blurred. Moreover, slum dwellers cannot afford a separate working place and carry out certain occupations (like shoe-making; small scale manufacturing of bags etc) within the home.

Though very negligible in proportion, the secondary work status in post-migration period reveals that 78 per cent of men moved alone are self-employed (own account workers), 6 and 15 per cent are regular salaried and wage labourers respectively. Men migrants with family share a similar profile.

Type of Work

Overall it is observed that in pre-migration period most of the self-employed men were cultivators in own farms (91.2 percent). Since, other avenues of employment are rare in rural settings, very few of them were engaged in manufacturing and in wholesale and retail trade. As regular salaried workers,



men were factory workers (57.1 percent), in service sectors (28.6 percent) and in wholesale and retail trade (14.3 percent). As wage labourers, agriculture (76.5 percent) attracted a large proportion of men. Other areas of employment are manufacturing (cobblers), head loaders and construction workers.

Since, the city does not provide any scope of agricultural activities, a total shift is noticed from agricultural to non-agricultural sectors. Thus, post-migration period reveals opening up of diverse avenues of employment – probably because of presence of large spectrum of job base and opportunities in the city. Manufacturing, wholesale and trading, transport and other services emerge as the prime entry points for the migrants although few occupations employ large number of migrants both as the self-employed and as wage labourers. Shoe-making and trading in animals are two such occupations. For example, of the total self-employed workers in manufacturing 97 percent are cobblers/shoemakers. Similarly, of the total wage labourers in manufacturing, 75 percent are into this occupation. These men are employed in the festive season like Id and Durga puja when the demand for such work is very high. Apart from these two main occupations, self-employed men are also engaged in transport sector (taxi, auto and rickshaw puller); small hotels/home-based canteens etc.

Regular salaried workers comprise salesmen of various sorts (35.3 percent). Apart from this, manufacturing (23.5 percent) employs people in different petty businesses such as leather, printing, binding and small publishing etc. In transport sector (17.6 percent) people are engaged as private car drivers. Rests of the men in regular salaried jobs are in government and private sectors.

As far as women migrants are concerned, it is observed that their employment avenues are limited as compared to men. Although post-migration exhibits diversification of employment avenues, they remain concentrated in certain occupations that can be described as 'feminine'. Before migration, the self-employed women were cultivators in own farms and also worked as unpaid helpers (43.8 percent). Apart from this, some women in wholesale and retail trade sector worked as fruit/vegetable seller, in educational sector as private tutor and in the health sector as mid-wife. In petty manufacturing (50 percent), they were engaged in purse/bag making, textile related, bidi rolling and agarbatti making etc. As regular salaried workers, women are engaged in factories (66.7 percent) in making bangles etc. Lastly as wage labourers, most of the women were agricultural labourers (95.8 percent).



After migrating to Kolkata, self-employed women worked both as unpaid helpers to their husbands or as dependent subcontract workers, where they are paid. In manufacturing (58 percent) they are engaged in making shoelaces, clothes, etc. In hotels and restaurants (10 percent), they work as unpaid helpers to their husbands. In wholesale and retail trade (12 percent), women worked as unpaid helpers in shops. About 20 percent of women are into some elementary occupations like making of paper packets, etc. Such works are repetitive, can easily be carried within home and require no particular skill. These types of occupations have both supply and demand perspective. On one hand, since the poor women are the sources of cheap and docile labour, they are entrusted with such petty works. On the other, these small-scale jobs provide them meagre incomes that form a small but important part of household income.

Regular salaried work is quite common among women. However, they work mainly as domestic maids (70.4 percent). This sort of work, which was uncommon in the villages, becomes an easy entry for poor and illiterate women in cities as it is more or less an extension of household work and does not requires any particular skill and educational level (Neetha, 2011)⁹. Another explanation of the entry of women in such work is that the same work that is accomplished within one's homes as unwaged becomes paid. Since it is performed within the homes, it remains within the 'private domain' - a domain that is customarily identified with women.

Apart from primary work, an enquiry into secondary occupation of the men migrants reveals an interesting feature – as high as 75 percent of those who moved alone in the city were cultivators or agricultural labourers in the villages. Such a trend is mainly observed among the cobblers where the work of shoemaking cannot be carried out in the city during the monsoon period. In this lean season, they visit the native places for agricultural work.

Conclusion

In sum, it may be said that the well-known socially ingrained gendered roles keep their hold on migratory processes as well. Men, primarily considered as the principal earners in the family, migrate mainly for economic reasons and follow a well-defined economic route. Their move into the city is a part of the survival strategy amidst poverty. Follow-up of traditional work as well as other

⁹Literacy rate of women worker (excepting domestic maid) is 60 per cent while only 47 per cent of the domestic workers are literate.



petty avenues are the main motivating factors to move. Men who move alone are economically weaker than those who migrate with families or they bring their families once they acquire foothold in the city.

More than 90 percent of women move as associational migrants and their migration is essentially guided by reasons related to marriage or family reunion. However, the study reveals that even though women move as a part of family strategy or marriage, about one-fourth of them were workers before migration and they enter labour market soon after migration. This proposition contests their presumed overall role as tied movers.

Although much is talked about women's autonomous movement, the study had very few cases of such movers. In absence of a male member, the entire household responsibilities as well as the risk associated with movement are solely borne by these autonomous movers. In all the cases, these women had moved for employment purposes.

Mobility is influenced by the process of social networking especially on account of the presence of fathers or other close kin members in the city. Such a process proves to be very influential in attracting migrants from particular areas. Presence of such network also seems to be quite relevant for autonomous women, all of whom were supported by their kin on their arrival in the city.

In case of associational women migrants the decision to move has been taken by their husbands whereas autonomous women usually decided their own move. Although, these women are the main decision maker, their movements involve considerable risks and uncertainty and it is a strategy to survive amongst the conditions of extreme poverty. Such migration decisions cannot be truly called a choice, rather it is a compulsion.

The basic tenets of labour market act differentially in case of men and women. Workers in the study area are mainly self-employed. Even though a large number of women work as unpaid helpers, in contrast, none of the men do so. The concentration of women in home-based activities reveals their duties towards home. Even if women are in regular salaried jobs, they mostly work as domestic workers—once again suggesting their concentration in feminine jobs.

The above discussion suggests that low-level migrants mostly find employment in informal sector of the city's economy. Though poor, still they disperse



some important activities to the city dwellers in terms of security guards, domestic servants, drivers etc. barring which the city life is often difficult to imagine. Women play a significant role in this, a role that merits further exploration.

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